

Constructing Community: Tamil Merchant Temples in India and China, 850-1281

Risha Lee

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ABSTRACT

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Risha Lee

This dissertation studies premodern temple architecture, freestanding sculpted stones, and Tamil language inscriptions patronized by south Indian merchants in south India and China. Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, Indian Ocean trade was at its apex, connecting populations on European and Asian continents through complex interlocking networks. Southern India's Tamil region, in particular, has been described as the fulcrum of the Indian Ocean circuit; however, knowledge of intra-Asian contact and exchange from this period has been derived mostly from Arabic and Chinese sources, which are abundant in comparison with the subcontinent's dearth of written history. My project redresses this lacuna by investigating the material culture of Tamil merchants, and aims to recover their history through *visual* evidence, authored by individuals who left few written traces of their voyages across the Indian Ocean. The arguments of my dissertation are based primarily on unpublished and unstudied monuments and inscriptions, weaving together threads from multiple disciplines—art history, literature, epigraphy, and social theory—and from across cultures, the interconnected region of the eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Seas, spanning the Sanskritic, Tamil, Malay, and Sinocentric realms.

My dissertation challenges traditional narratives of Indian art history that have long attributed the majority of monumental architecture to royal patrons, focusing instead on the artistic production of cosmopolitan merchants who navigated both elite and non-

elite realms of society. I argue that by constructing monuments throughout the Indian Ocean trade circuit, merchants with ties to southern India's Tamil region formulated a coherent group identity in the absence of a central authority. Similar impulses also are visible in merchants' literary production, illustrated through several newly translated panegyric texts, which preface mercantile donations appearing on temple walls in the modern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. Moreover, my work analyzes the complex processes of translation visible in literary and material culture commissioned by merchants, resulting from inter-regional and intercultural encounters among artisans, patrons, and local communities.

Rather than identifying a monolithic source for merchants' artistic innovations, in each chapter I demonstrate the multiple ways in which merchants employed visual codes from different social realms (courtly, mercantile, and agrarian) to create their built environments. In Chapter Four, I provide a detailed reconstruction and historical chronology of a late thirteenth century temple in Quanzhou, coastal Fujian Province, southeastern China, which both echoes and transforms architectural forms of contemporaneous temples in India's Tamil region. Piecing together over 300 carvings discovered in the region in light of archaeological and art historical evidence, I develop a chronology of the temple's history, and propose that Ming forces destroyed the temple scarcely a century after its creation. In Chapter Three, I interpret stone temples patronized by the largest south Indian merchant association, the Ainnurruvar, as being integral to their self-fashioning in India and abroad. While the temples do not project a merchant identity *per se*, I show that they employ an artistic vocabulary deeply entrenched in the visual language of the Tamil region. Chapter Two looks at other forms

through which merchants created a shared mercantile culture, including literary expressions and freestanding sculptural stones. These texts demonstrate that merchants engaged in both elite and non-elite artistic production. Chapter One analyzes the distribution, content, and context of Tamil merchant sponsored inscriptions within the Indian Ocean circuit, focusing on the modern regions of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh. An appendix offers new translations of important Tamil language mercantile inscriptions discovered throughout south India.

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A Note on Translation and Transliterations

I have tried to keep diacriticals to a minimum, with the exception of Sanskritic and Tamil architectural terminology. Without diacritics, these important terms would make little sense; I have included an architectural glossary for further clarification, following the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture's*. When terms have been transliterated from Tamil, Sanskrit, or Chinese, I have followed the diacritical systems of *Epigraphia Indica* and *pinyin*. Plurals of these terms employ the English convention of adding *s*.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARE	= Annual Reports on Epigraphy
AMCA	= Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean
EITA	= Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture: Lower Dravidadesa
IPS	= Inscriptions of Pudukkottai State
SII	= South Indian Inscriptions

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INTRODUCTION

Between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, south Indian trade networks expanded dramatically, both internally and across the Indian Ocean. Merchants, many of whom came from the Tamil region in India's far south, transported merchandise to all corners of the Asian world via the Indian Ocean. These included luxury items such as spices, horses, woven cloth, pearls and gems as well as everyday items such as rice and oil.¹ Movement was not limited to inanimate objects, for trade also disseminated people and ideas across vast spaces. These exchanges created a world comprised of tightly knit, intercultural spheres, which many scholars have termed the 'world system.' The world system's apex was reached in the thirteenth century, when, as Janet Abu-Lughod describes, "there was an efflorescence of cultural and artistic achievement. Never before had so many parts of the Old World simultaneously reached cultural maturity."²

The coastal port city of Quanzhou, in Fujian province in southern China, attests to this point. While Chinese records prove that it operated as an international trading entrepot from as early as the ninth century, it was dwarfed in importance by Guangzhou, a port city located approximately 450 miles to its southwest, until the mid-eleventh century.³ The influx of foreign traders into Quanzhou steadily increased from this time onwards, with an explosion of activity at the end of the thirteenth century, when a

¹For a comprehensive list of trade goods, see Meera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1988).

² Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.

³ Guangzhou appears in several Arabic and Persian language travelogues, for instance, the early tenth century Arab geographer, Ibn Khordadbeh's *Treatise of Roads and Provinces* (*Kitab al-masalik wa'l-mamalik*) and Abu Zayd's late ninth century text, *An Account of China and India* (*Ahbar al-sin wa l-hind*), trans. Jean Sauvaget, (Paris: Société d'édition les belles lettres, 1948). See Chapter Four for a full discussion of the Chinese historical context.

nomadic tribe of ethnic Mongols foreign to China founded the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Owing to their own foreign status, the Mongols' policies included granting special trading privileges to foreigners, which made Quanzhou an even more desirable location for foreign trade. During this time, it was the most cosmopolitan city in the world and the crossroads of many non-ethnic Chinese, including Indians, Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Southeast Asians, Syrians, Armenians, and Italians. Eminent visitors such as Marco Polo visited the city. According to Marco Polo,

[Quanzhou is] frequented by all the ships of India, which bring thither spicery and all other kinds of costly wares . . . hither is imported the most astonishing quantity of goods and precious stones and pearls . . . And I assure you that for one shipload of pepper that goes to Alexandria or elsewhere, destined for Christendom, there come a hundred such, aye and more too, to this haven of Zayton;⁴ for it is one of the two greatest havens in the world for commerce.⁵

Later, Polo specifically mentions his encounters with Indian merchants writing, "these Brahmans are the best merchants in the world, and the most truthful, for they would not tell a lie for anything on earth."⁶ Polo's high praise resulted from encounters with Indian

⁴ Zayton, a medieval name for Quanzhou, derives from the Arabic word for olive, *zaytun*.

⁵ Marco Polo, *Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, Ed. George B. Parks, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 241.

Frances Wood's popular book, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998) disputes the authenticity of Polo's accounts of China. Several Mongol period scholars, such as Morris Rossabi, have disagreed with her arguments, faulting the author for her "lack of expertise," resulting in "misrepresentations and mistakes." The current scholarly consensus is that Marco Polo did indeed go to China. See Rossabi, "Did Marco Polo Really Go to China?," http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/pop/polo/mp_essay.htm.

⁶ Polo, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 285.

merchants during his travels, informing us of the numerous Indian trade diaspora communities living in India, Southeast Asia, and China at this time. The Indian presence in Quanzhou is further substantiated by the ruins of a temple devoted to the Hindu god Shiva now primarily housed in the Quanzhou Maritime Museum and reused as *spolia* in the city's oldest Buddhist temple. The ruins contain several sculptural representations of Shaivite and Vaishnavite (Shiva and Vishnu) iconography, first noted in 1933 by Ananda Coomaraswamy.⁷ Subsequent writings have elaborated on these motifs and convincingly linked the artistic style to the Tamil region of south India; however, they have not considered the majority of extant architectural carvings, which, while lacking in figurative imagery, enable us to reconstruct a substantial portion of the temple.

On the one hand, this dissertation focuses on the Shiva temple in Quanzhou, compiling and analyzing all available evidence regarding its construction. I consider the over 300 extant temple carvings, archaeological evidence, and written texts that reference Indians living in Quanzhou to reconstruct the temple's history. On the other hand, the majority of the dissertation seeks to frame the Quanzhou temple within its wider context, as a product of Tamil merchants' patronage. In the medieval period, Tamil merchants, hailing from regions that comprise modern Tamil Nadu, southern Karnataka, southern Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala (which I shall refer to henceforth as south India), established permanent communities along the Indian Ocean route that connected India to China, leaving behind Tamil language stone inscriptions and south Indian style architectural carvings. Within south India as well, they actively patronized temples and other institutions, testifying to their frequently powerful positions within society. My

⁷ Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton," *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 9 (1933), 5-11.

dissertation asks if, how, and why we might see these communities in relation to one another.

This dissertation unites a variety of primary sources, produced by Tamil merchants and germane to a discussion of their wider role in the premodern Indian Ocean world. These include stone monuments (temples and sculptural freestanding stones), primarily in the modern Tamil region and the city of Quanzhou, stone-carved inscriptions from the same locations, and references to merchants in contemporaneous literary texts. The arguments of my dissertation are based primarily on unpublished and unstudied material, weaving together threads from multiple disciplines—art history, literature, epigraphy, and social theory—and from across cultures, the interconnected region of the eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Seas (Map 1). Rather than reinforce the notion that premodern India was static and unchanging, an assumption prevalent in colonial era studies of the subcontinent, the material culture examined in this dissertation supports the concept of an interconnected world, where people negotiated local, regional, and global identities on a daily basis. Tamil merchants were but one component of a truly heterogeneous mercantile cosmopolis that expanded dramatically in the ninth century, uniting multiple ethnic, political, and religious groups in interlocking trade networks. These communities comprised a significant portion of the population at port cities throughout the Indian Ocean circuit, as many recent studies have shown.⁸

The Quanzhou temple's existence can be explained only through understanding the Indian Ocean's enormous role in shaping south Indian history. The Indian Ocean

⁸ For example see Elizabeth Lambourn, "India from Aden: Khutba and Muslim Urban Networks in Late 13th century India," in *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400-1800*, ed. Kenneth R. Hall, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 55-97.

covers about 27 percent of the world's total maritime space and has one of the longest histories of sea traffic connecting Mediterranean, Arabic, Indic, Malay, and Sinocentric realms, which some estimate to have lasted around six millennia.⁹ Individuals living in port cities had frequent contact with multiple cultural groups. In turn, the flow of goods and information to port cities affected the development of the hinterland. The ocean's inherently intercultural nature and importance as a conduit that connected different cultural zones is a concept only now receiving attention in studies of premodern South Asian art history. Studies focusing on art representative of intercultural Islamic exchange have employed similar theoretical constructs, seeing transregional identity and cross-cultural exchange as intrinsic to human experience. Though focused on Tamil merchant patrons, this study aims to contribute to these intellectual projects.

Merchant Patrons

Before continuing, I should mention that no medieval record explicitly states that Tamil-speaking merchants constructed a Shiva temple in Quanzhou. Rather, the temple's history can be inferred through secondary evidence—the absence of a royal name in an extant bilingual Tamil-Chinese inscription at Quanzhou; traveler's diaries (such as those of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta) recording the presence of Indian merchants at all ports of trade in the Indian Ocean; and, most importantly, the abundant material evidence attesting to active pathways of mercantile traffic across South India and Southeast Asia.

⁹ Michael Pearson writes that “relatively routine and organized trade using the Indian Ocean as a highway” began with the “rise of early civilizations in the Tigris-Euphrates area, and in northwest India.” Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean, Seas in History* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 49.

We can study merchants as a distinct group because we know that they frequently thought of themselves as such. Merchants comprised a distinct class of non-royal individuals, whose profession required intense mobility and continual negotiation between local and cosmopolitan identities. Here, I use cosmopolitan as a term that describes, as Enseng Ho elegantly articulates, “persons who, while embedded in local relations, also maintain connections with distant places [and] thus articulate a relation between different geographical scales.”¹⁰ Several studies highlight the merchant’s integral role in developing “supralocal systems of exchange that cut across (while not necessarily transcending) ethnic, linguistic, political and religious boundaries.”¹¹ In this way, many of this study’s actors were transregional—a fact expressed by the period’s merchant-patronized literary and material culture.

In hundreds of inscriptions, merchants identify themselves according to profession, the most common titles being *nagarattar*, *vyabari*, *vaniyar*, and *chetti*. There was a huge range of professional differentiation, with merchants specializing in the sale of specific goods at various locales, including local and regional markets, and periodic fairs. Some merchant titles refer directly to their specific merchandise, e.g. *katriban* = betel leaf merchant, while others were more abstract, designating membership in supralocal merchant organizations.¹²

¹⁰ Enseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, The California World History Library 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 31.

¹¹ Finbarr Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu-Muslim Encounter*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 16.

¹² *Ancient and Medieval Activities in the Indian Ocean* (hereafter *AMCA*) contains the most complete list of merchant (individual and organizational) titles, listing over a hundred constituent groups. In N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu’s “Ainnurruvar: A Supra-local Organization of South Indian and Sri Lankan Merchants,” *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions*

These professional identities were far from stable. Not only did merchant groups sometimes distinguish themselves from others in order to gain status, as we see in the more contemporary example of the Natukkottai Chettis,¹³ they constantly competed with, incorporated, and subsumed one another, so that one might list twenty other organizations and/or professional classes as its subsidiary agents. Mercantile associations were structurally complex, characterized by constant change according to time and locality. Indeed, our understanding of these groups is still murky. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, extraordinary mobility and transregional identity were defining group characteristics.

Because the spectrum of mercantile actors in South India is so vast, it is necessary to focus on a specific group in order to make a convincing comparative study of the patrons of the Quanzhou Shiva temple. Luckily, one organization presents itself as the most obvious parallel: the Ainnurruvar,¹⁴ roughly translated as ‘The Five Hundred Members,’ and known in Kannada texts as the Ayyavole Five Hundred. Although other merchant organizations proliferated during this period, none were as successful in terms of geographic penetration and historical longevity. Ainnurruvar inscriptions, dating from between the ninth and seventeenth centuries, have been discovered throughout south India and as far away as Sumatra. Many proclaim the organization’s infinite origins with the following refrain: “we are the Five Hundred of the Thousand Directions of the four quadrants of the world (*Nāṇādēsi ticai āyirataiṇṇūrruvar*),” from which it is apparent

and Ceramic-Sherds: Report of the Taisho University Research Project, 1997-2002. (Tokyo: Taisho University, 2002), 76-82.

¹³ See David West Rudner, *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India : The Nattukottai Chettiars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Pronounced *I-noo-troo-var*.

that their transregionalism (both real and imagined) was integral to group identity and cultural worldview.¹⁵ Although we will never know if its members participated in constructing the Quanzhou temple, the organization's literal and imagined geographical and ideological expansiveness strongly suggests that it would have impacted the policies and behavior of contemporaneous merchant groups.

The Ainnurruvar's architectural commissions and associated inscriptions form the skeleton of the current study. The association has been studied in several works, most notably Meera Abraham's *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India*, Kenneth Hall's *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Colas*, and most recently, the edited volume *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean*. The current study is indebted to these groundbreaking works, which have collected, translated, and analyzed a huge amount of empirical data pertaining to the Ainnurruvar, which I have used as a literal and virtual roadmap.

The Ainnurruvar's composition and associated regions fluctuated greatly, with the greatest concentration of inscriptions commissioned between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Inscriptions naming the Ainnurruvar are found all over south India, but mostly in the modern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Invariably, as the Ainnurruvar rose to power, they incorporated smaller local organizations into the fray, attested to by multiple inscriptions that name the Ainnurruvar organization as the main patron, often followed by a long list of other merchant organizations. Since the inscriptional content varies much

¹⁵ Many contemporaneous South Indian organizations (including merchant, royal, agrarian, and other groups) used numbers into their titles. For example, the "Bellagunda 300," or the 'Kemgal Five Hundred,' which operated in Nolambavadi territory. See Andrew Cohen, *Temple Architecture and Sculpture of the Nolambas: (Ninth-Tenth Centuries)*, (New Delhi, India: Manohar, 1998), 26. Also see Chapter 2 on the subject of incorporating sacred numerology into the Ainnurruvar eulogy.

according to region and time period, scholars have struggled to define the organization, often using the word “guild” as a descriptor.

Describing the Ainnurruvar’s power structure is even more difficult. Several studies have attempted this feat, but crucial structural elements, e.g. central governing bodies, legalistic codes, hierarchy, either remain unidentified or highly debated. For example, Kenneth Hall proposes that the Ainnurruvar operated through the Chola state mediated institution of the *nagaram*, or commercial city center, which regulated local and long distance trade. In this vision, there is a sharp distinction between local and itinerant merchants, who converge upon the *nagaram* to exchange wares within a highly systemized forum. Hall characterizes the Ainnurruvar as permanently itinerant carriers of exclusively exotic and foreign merchandise who are barred from conducting trade at the local level of the village.¹⁶ While Hall acknowledges that the systems are highly complex, varying throughout time and by region, he assumes the village to be a relatively static and self-contained entity.

¹⁶ Kenneth Hall proposes the *nagaram* as the main unit governing mercantile exchange, drawing much inspiration from Quentin Skinner’s “high-order and low-order market” model, best articulated in Skinner’s “Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China.” In Hall’s own words,

Skinnner mapped communities of exchange, market towns, and their dependent territories. He then overlaid contemporary units of government administration to establish relationships between marketing structures and government. (P. 124)

He then writes,

The distribution of *nagaram* in the Cola domain, as well as supporting epigraphic evidence, indicates that the South Indian *nagaram* functioned similarly to Skinner’s market centers, serving a series of local villages by connecting them to the upper levels of a marketing system. (P. 125)

Perhaps in his eagerness to comply with Skinner’s model, Hall oversimplifies many of the “state’s” organizational features. Scholars such as L. Thiyagarajan, for example, dispute Hall’s central claim that there was only one *nagaram* per *nadu* (territorial unit in Chola period). The most problematic aspect of his evaluation is the strict division between “local” and “itinerant” merchants. As subsequent research suggests, the borders between these communities are far from neatly drawn. Hall summarizes Skinner in *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of Colas*, 1st ed. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1980), pp. 124-5.

Meera Abraham argues that little evidence directly connects the Ainnurruvar to the institution of the *nagaram*, noting that records contain many instances of the merchants acting independently. Moreover, she rejects Hall's binary division between communities of local and itinerant traders, acknowledging the high degree of interaction between the two. Her self-described "micro-study" of two merchant organizations, the Ainnurruvar and the Manigramam, results in an unprecedented compilation and analysis of related inscriptions. One of its greatest insights is of the organizations' internal diversity—Abraham concludes that the Ainnurruvar managed a myriad of other professionals: weavers, basket makers, potters, leather workers, market gardeners, and peasant farmers, to name a few.¹⁷ Later studies expand upon this notion, defining the Ainnurruvar as a "merchant organization which overarches all the substantial merchant organizations formed in some particular area, locality or town."¹⁸

While these studies have advanced our knowledge of the Ainnurruvar, their definition remains vague and fails to emphasize the organization's strongly transregional dimensions. This dissertation's inclusion of associated material culture—in particular, its study of inter-communal architectural collaborations and associated artistic forms—expands the available textual evidence dramatically, while its interpretive thrust advocates a shift away from understanding art within the totalizing paradigms of South Indian kingship. By expanding the textual and interpretive foci, this study attempts to gain insight into the social history of premodern merchants.

¹⁷ Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds*, 5.

¹⁸ Karshima and Subbarayalu, "Ainnurruvar: A Supra-local Organization of South Indian and Sri Lankan Merchants," in *AMCA*, p. 87.

Beyond Royal History

Popular South Indian history has always been a story of kings. In Tamil Nadu, India's most southeastern region, children learn the state's royal roots from grammar school onwards. An edict from the third century BCE, attributed to the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka (ca. 304-232 BCE), records three great south Indian kingships: the Pandya, Chola, and Chera, which once divided the geographical region corresponding to modern Kerala and Tamil Nadu. By the fourth century, mysterious invaders, identified as the Kalabrahmas, are said to have seized the region. Little is known about this time period. The sixth through eighth centuries open a brighter chapter, initiated by the Pallava kings, who reigned over the majority of northern Tamil Nadu, and at times, the southernmost portions of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The nation's golden age is synonymous with the Chola monarchs (849-1279), who conquered great swaths of land as far north as Andhra Pradesh's Godavari River and outside India's modern boundaries to Sri Lanka, the Maldives Islands, and beyond. Though the dynastic chronology continues, popular scholarship recognizes the Cholas as its definitive climax, a fact which is illustrated by semi-annual festivals still held at the Rajarajesvara, or Brihadisvara, temple in Tanjavur (Fig. 0.1), to commemorate its patron, the Chola king Rajaraja I (r. 995-1010), and his unparalleled cultural contributions to Tamil civilization. National newspapers report that these festivals "not only [pay] tribute to the King and the temple he built but [serve as] a reminder to [the] young generation about [their] past glory."¹⁹

These sentiments echo those by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, one of the early twentieth century's most prolific Indologists and grandfather of Chola studies, who wrote, "Tamil

¹⁹ G. Srinivasan, "Tribute to Temple's Grandeur," last modified September 24, 2010, <http://www.hindu.com/2010/09/24/stories/2010092458140200.htm>

civilization may be said to have attained its high water mark under the Cola empire of the tenth to the thirteenth century.”²⁰ In his oft-cited text, *The Cōlas*, Sastri augments the Chola’s impact on Tamil society even further, arguing that the royals enjoyed continuous control of the Tamil region from the second century BCE onwards.²¹ Emphasizing the Chola empire’s pervasiveness and historical continuity makes the study’s purpose self-explanatory: the author finds the glory of Tamil civilization within Chola history.

Similar attitudes color studies of Tamil art and architecture, which have focused almost exclusively on royal commissions. In fact, until only a few decades ago, scholars assumed that the Chola monarchs commissioned *all* architectural monuments, (quite a proposition since the period’s temples number well in the hundreds).²² Several tomes have been written on Rajaraja I’s Tanjavur temple alone.²³ In these studies, the Rajarajesvara’s architectural perfection becomes analogous to perfected modalities of kingship. Percy Brown provides the consummate example of this logic in his celebrated tome, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*. For Brown, Rajaraja I’s temple demonstrates that “the Chola dynasty had been made aware of its vast power and had had its character revealed to itself . . . The first ruler to become conscious of this sense of

²⁰ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Colas*, (Madras: University of Madras, 1935), 2.

²¹ Sastri states that “the history of the Colas falls naturally into four divisions: the age of the literature of the Sangam, the interval between the close of the Sangam age and the rise of the Vijayalaya line, the Vijayalaya line which came to prominence in the ninth century A.D. and lastly, the Calukya-Cola line of Kulottunga I and his successors from the third quarter of the eleventh century to about the middle of the thirteenth.” Ibid.

²² For example R. Champakalakshmi writes, “almost all Chola temples have foundation inscriptions which identify the patrons under whom the temples were built . . . invariably the construction of the *vimana* is by a royal personage or a chieftan; there is not a single instance in the entire Cola period of any *vimana* being constructed by a *vellala* or a group from the local populace.” Quoted in Leslie Orr, “Cholas, Pandyas, and ‘Imperial Temple Culture’ in Medieval Tamilnadu,” In *The Temple in South Asia*, edited by Adam Hardy, (London: British Association for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007), 237.

²³ See B. Venkataraman, *Rajarajesvaram, the Pinnacle of Chola Art*, (Madras, India: Mudgala Trust, 1985).

their own might was Rajaraja the Great (985-1018), which he proceeded to inaugurate by a superb architectural monument. It must have been a profoundly spiritual impulse which moved this ruler to commemorate the material achievements of his line . . .”²⁴

These analyses beg reconsideration for several reasons. First, it is clear that many non-royal actors played important roles within ‘premodern’ or ‘medieval’ Indian society, and excluding them paints an inaccurate historical picture. Second, the reason why scholars have emphasized India’s dynastic history is theoretically charged. Over the past century, the premodern, non-western world has been used as a foil against which to define the modern nation state. Benedict Anderson’s classic, *Imagined Communities*, exemplifies this world-view. In the premodern era, he argues, religious community and dynastic realm were “taken-for-granted frames of reference” and that “all the great classical communities conceived of themselves as cosmically central, through the medium of a sacred language linked to a superterrestrial order of power.”²⁵ This line of thinking leads to theories of a *rupture* between premodern (or medieval/ancient) and modern time periods predicated upon the premodern’s presumed *difference* from the modern. In other words, Anderson presupposes, rather than demonstrates, a difference between the two periods.²⁶

²⁴ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, (Bombay: D B. Taraporevala Sons and Co. Private LTD, 1956), 103.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Rev. ed. London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 13.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson succinctly describes this rupture/binary: “in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought . . . nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which-as well as against which-it came into being.” Ibid, 11-12.

These theories have affected the last century's scholarship of the non-western world. In its more egregious form, in justifying Europe's claims to political hegemony over its colonies, colonial era scholars described non-western societies as diametrically opposed to notions of modernity. India, in particular, represented the modern's anathema—a society driven by irrational impulses and ruled by despotic kings. As scholars have shown elsewhere, Indian nationalist historians, in direct response to these orientalist accounts, produced studies extolling India's glorious, indigenous past.²⁷ Sastri's work exemplifies this phenomenon. Nationalist, decolonizing motivations produced a rhetoric that perpetuated the monarchic fixation, albeit with a positive valence. In recent years, scholars have criticized the exclusion of non-royal actors from studies of South Indian temple architecture, noting that the emphasis on royalty relies upon a colonial logic separating center from periphery, with the latter being subject to the former's domination.²⁸ As scholars produce more studies of premodern cultures, the sharp division between ancient world and modern nation-state blurs. In direct contradiction to Anderson's equation of premodernity with a 'cosmically central' worldview, these studies chart premodern actors negotiating complex socio-cultural identities on a daily basis, engaging in activities and pursuits unrelated to religious piety.

²⁷ See Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2004.

²⁸ See Padma Kaimal "Early Cola Kings and "Early Cola Temples": Art and the Evolution of Kingship." *Artibus Asiae* 56, no. 1/2 (1996), 5, and Andrew Cohen's *Temple Architecture and Sculpture of the Nolambas: (Ninth-Tenth Centuries)*, (New Delhi, India: Manohar, 1998).

Studying inscriptions from early Buddhist *stupas*, Vidya Dehejia has demonstrated that many individual non-royal donors frequently sponsored their construction. See Vidya Dehejia, "Collective and Popular Bases of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 B.C. – A. D. 250," in *The Powers of Art*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 35-45.

In identifying some of the past century's scholarly motivations for studying kingship, I do not mean to suggest that monarchies were unimportant; rather, my aim is to complicate our understanding of the dynamic that existed between social classes. In many instances, the merchants in this study recognized and subordinated themselves to the sovereignty of the ruling monarchs. This is apparent in inscriptional dating practices, which, in the opening salvo, date the donation according to the reigning king's regnal year (e.g. "this was written in the third regnal year of the Chola king, Rajaraja I). In many cases, there are striking parallels between mercantile and monarchical cultural practices, especially literary conventions and artistic style, reflecting a relationship characterized by interdependency. In other instances, however, (increasingly during the late Chola period), merchants acted without royal approval, cooperating with non-elite populations. I explore these issues in Chapters Two and Three.

The Tamil Trade Diaspora

I identify the dissertation's subject population as "Tamil" for a number of reasons. On a literal level, most of the primary textual sources I consulted are written in Tamil script and language, save for a few in Sanskrit and Kannada. On an analytic level, this descriptive is misleading, since a cursory investigation of merchant groups testifies to the prevalence of transregional activities and identities in the premodern period, a fact which blurs the boundaries between linguistic communities. Sources show that the regions corresponding to modern day Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu were connected in interlocking political, economic, and cultural networks from early times. In Chapter One, for example, I examine information contained in inscriptions (both content

and density) to demonstrate the high degree of interaction between merchant groups in Tamil Nadu and Southern Karnataka. Linguistic, artistic, and religious exchange was ubiquitous: for example, many temples in southern Karnataka are inscribed with Tamil text, but written in vernacular Kannada script. Likewise, Kannada text appears in inscriptions on temples in Kannanur, Tamil Nadu where the Karnataka-based Hoysala rulers founded their Tamil capital in the thirteenth century.²⁹ Additionally, as analyzed in Chapter Two, an Ainnurruvar-commissioned *praśasti* (eulogy) appears in inscriptions in Tamil and Kannada languages. Narrating the origins of the Ainnurruvar in poetic prose, little variation exists between the Tamil and Kannada texts; indeed, vocabulary and phraseology are nearly identical.

As such, I justify employing the term “Tamil merchants” as a group descriptive based on evidence collected outside India, where merchants elected to use distinctly Tamil linguistic and artistic conventions. Archaeologists and epigraphists have identified at least nine Tamil script/language inscriptions at different locations in Southeast Asia.³⁰ These are not the only indicators of a Tamil presence. Although little work has been done on the subject, conversations with scholars and curators have revealed several sites in Southeast Asia housing Dravida (south Indian-style) carvings, clearly from religious monuments. Photos from south Thailand’s Nakhon si Thammarat Museum reveal a distinctive form of bracket capitals known as *puṣpapōṭigai* in Tamil architectural terminology (Fig. 0.2). While this material demands closer inspection, its sheer presence

²⁹ Dorasamudra (Halebid) in Karnataka remained their primary capital.

³⁰ See N. Karashima, “Tamil Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China,” in *AMCA*, pp. 10-18, and Jan Wisseman Christie, “The Medieval Tamil-Language Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 29, no. 2 1998: 239-68.

suggests that in the premodern period Tamil-speaking diaspora communities participated in trade networks that connected South India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and Southern China into a single circulatory sphere. Similarly, in choosing to record donations using Tamil script (and sometimes Sanskrit), rather than Kannada, Telugu, or Malayalam, it is likely that merchants self-consciously maintained a Tamil identity abroad, even while continually engaging with individuals hailing from a wide variety of ethnic, political, and religious affiliations, connected by the world system. Though we still do not fully understand how these affiliations worked, we know they varied greatly according to each community. Elizabeth Lambourn, for example, writing on connections among Muslim communities across the Indian Ocean, proposes that “*khutba* networks,” in which names of particular rulers were mentioned in the Friday sermon (*khutba*), allowed individual communities to formalize their relations with particular geographical centers and religious leaders.³¹

This dissertation also argues that studying settlements of Tamil merchants living outside of India is crucial to understanding how merchants operated in South India. Even though these communities left fewer written records than the Muslim polities just mentioned, I believe that it is possible to recover something of their connective filament, largely from visual evidence. Drawing on the work of Indian Ocean scholars such as Philip Curtin and K. N. Chaudhuri, I investigate the artistic production of South Indian, Tamil-speaking merchants in India as well as that of trade diasporas. In Curtin’s

³¹ Elizabeth Lambourn, “India from Aden: *Khutba* and Muslim Urban Networks in Late Thirteenth-Century India,” in *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400-1800*, ed. Kenneth Hall, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), 55.

formulation, “trade diaspora,” describes mercantile communities with diverse systems of governance. He writes,

Sometimes scattered settlements of the same culture had no formal ties of any kind. They were united only by the solidarity that could be built on the sentimental ties of common religion, language, or distant kinship. At the other extreme were trade diasporas that were founded as political entities with each node under central control.³²

To date, no study has analyzed these Tamil merchant communities’ connected histories in the Indian Ocean circuit. This lacuna has resulted, in part, from the fact that empirical data on individual communities of the time is sparse. Moreover, an academic tendency to study particular areas or regions individually as opposed to cross-culturally has prevented comparative work, particularly in the discipline of art history. Visual and literary cultural studies, produced in and around the Indian ocean littoral, have fortunately begun to buck this trend, exposing the anachronism of scholars who apply modern epistemological understandings of space and nation to people of the premodern past who were much more mobile than typically assumed.³³

³² Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Studies in Comparative World History (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 7. See also K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean : An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Kenneth R. Hall, *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, C. 1400-1800* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).

³³ Many scholars have debunked the equation of mobility with modernity. For instance, Enseng Ho emphasizes that before modernism, “experiences of mobility involved complex and subtle interplays between absence and presence in many dimensions: tactile, visual, auditory, affective, aesthetic, textual, and mystical.” Enseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, The California World History Library 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

While existing studies of Indian Ocean merchant communities do attend to inscriptions etched into stone surfaces across South India and Southeast Asia, they generally treat this information as purely textual, and neglect analyzing the material objects themselves. In contrast, my work brings material culture to the analytical fore by highlighting the narrative potential of visual sources, treating monuments, art objects, and artifacts produced by or linked to South Indian merchants as important historical “texts.” In many cases, these items are the sole remnants of once vibrant mercantile communities.

I have conceived of this project as a first in a series of works on the artistic production of Tamil trade diaspora communities within the Indian Ocean circuit. In my fieldwork, I visited sites in southern India (coastal and inland Tamil Nadu and southern Karnataka) as well as the city of Quanzhou in China. At each of the 149 sites I visited, epigraphical and architectural structures/remains attest to the historical presence of Tamil-speaking merchant communities. In Chapter One, by analyzing the information contained within the epigraphical record, in addition to merchant-produced material culture, I argue that a transregional, perhaps even transcultural merchant identity was forged. Merchants were less connected by commercial partnerships than by shared sign-systems of solidarity, which art and literature played essential roles in signaling. As a result of this transregional self-imagination, I contend, merchants eventually gained power and independence from central authority, becoming important local elites themselves. This non-royal perspective in fact fits nicely with manuals describing royal codes of conduct, such as the *Arthaśāstra*. This text is regarded as premodern India’s most important administrative manual for kings, and expresses “a vision of political authority that is multicentered, necessarily shifting, and automatically encompassing a

wide range of semi-autonomous forms or intermediate authorities within the ambit of the realm.”³⁴

My arguments figure into current scholarship on the nature of political power in South Asia between 1000-1500. Identifying and analyzing the phenomenon of vernacularization in southern Asia from roughly the second millennium onwards—in which vernacular literary cultures languages displaced the more homogenized and cosmopolitan Sanskrit literary culture—Pollock argues that these changes “not only correlate with transformations in social identity but appear at times to converge with a shift in the perceived scope of political power.”³⁵ Whereas before, Sanskrit literary texts had circulated within a vast geographic expanse, from Central Asia to Sri Lanka and from Afghanistan to Annam, now individuals who chose to enunciate their identities through more localized vernacular literature elected to break not just with a language, but also with cultural communication and self-understanding.³⁶ At the heart of Pollock’s argument is the belief that choosing to write in a language itself communicated a very particular vision of the world.³⁷ My dissertation makes similar contentions about the significance of the architectural patron’s choice of form and content—the deployment of

³⁴ James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State*, (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 15.

³⁵ Sheldon Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000-1500, *Daedalus* 125, no. 3 Early Modernities (Summer 1998), 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

³⁷ Pollock sees “the rise and spread of Sanskrit inscriptions [as] a synecdoche for a range of literary-cultural (and political-cultural) practices;” similarly, I wonder whether we can interpret the spread of Tamil language inscriptions and architecture across the Indian Ocean as signifying discrete political-cultural practices. Pollock, “The Cosmopolitan Vernacular,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (February 1998), 6.

Dravida style carvings—to the forging of a cosmopolitan Tamil merchant identity in the Indian Ocean circuit between 850 and 1281.

Kochchenganan in China

These concerns are illustrated better, perhaps, by examining a sculptural relief from the Quanzhou Shiva temple (Fig. 0.3). Carved on a granite slab measuring roughly 27” (length) x 8” (depth) x 18” (height), it depicts a caparisoned elephant approaching a *linga* (aniconic symbol of Shiva) underneath the branches of a flowering tree. The elephant lifts its trunk mid-step and delicately places a large lotus flower atop the *linga*. The relief illustrates a well-known tale of the early Chola king, Kochchenganan. In one of his past lives, Kochchenganan was a spider that wove a daily web to protect a Shiva *linga* located in a forest. An equally devout elephant also paid daily homage to the *linga* by lustrating it with water from its trunk, thereby removing the spider’s web. The fortunes of both animals changed one day, when the spider, infuriated by the elephant’s continued destruction of his work, attacked it and bit its trunk. The elephant smashed his trunk against the ground, killing the spider, but then died from the venomous bite.³⁸ Ultimately, Shiva rewards both creatures for their devotion with honorable reincarnations.

Kochchenganan iconography rarely appears outside of the Tamil region. The *Periyapurānam*, the twelfth century Tamil literary work in which the story is recounted, specifies that the event occurred on the banks of the Kaveri River, one of the major centers of cultural production within the Tamil region. An iconographic parallel to the Quanzhou panel appears in the *mandapa* of the Jambukesvarar Shiva temple in

³⁸ Sekkizhar, trans. TN Ramachandran, *St. Sekkizhar’s Periyapurānam*, (Tanjavur: Tamil University, 1990), 4197-4202.

Tiruvanaikka, Tiruchirappalli District, (Fig. 0.4), stylistically assignable to the Nayaka period (ca. sixteenth-seventeenth centuries).³⁹ The most noticeable difference between the two Kochchenganan reliefs is that the Tiruvanaikka version contains several additional figures. These are the goddess, Lakshmi, who extends a hand in benediction on behalf of Shiva, the sage, Agastya, who sits in a devotional posture underneath the tree, and a spider, Kochchenganan, which seems to hover in dead space over the *linga*. One could generalize that the Tiruvanaikka relief contains more of the story's narrative elements; however, the Quanzhou version contains enough iconic elements to identify the tale: an elephant with upturned trunk, lotus, *linga*, and flowering tree with individuated leaves. It also maintains the same composition as Tiruvanaikka's, albeit reversed, with the elephant approaching the *linga* from the viewer's right, with the tree on our far left. Yet there are also differences. Strongly linear in design, the Quanzhou elephant and *linga*, while well proportioned, are executed in a flat relief, suggesting a hand less accustomed to portraying sculptural volume. The artist has depicted the elephant ears with rigid triangular folds, a stylistic treatment unseen in India, but more akin to Chinese ornamental patterns such as the dense and angular cloud motif that appears at the *linga*'s base in the Quanzhou relief.

The above example encourages us to rethink several concepts that have been central to scholarship on south Indian history and society. First, its unexpected location in China demonstrates the artistic patronage of Tamil merchants, who voyaged through the Indian Ocean to arrive there, revising the traditional view of Indian art as an exclusively royal enterprise. Second, it expands Indic visual culture's geographical reach,

³⁹ Local legend states that Kochchengannan constructed the original temple in Tiruvanaikka. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, 392.

since the narrative depiction's existence outside India attests to a larger circulatory network within the Indian Ocean. Finally, it points up the cross-cultural transmission of artistic style by expressing a melding of Sino-Indic concepts and techniques, encouraging a reading that emphasizes the artist's and patron's active engagement with aesthetic form, and the transformation of preexisting representational modes.

I have organized this dissertation typologically and thematically, so that each chapter focuses on different primary sources and questions. Chapter One, "Tamil Merchants in World History," provides a historical framework, emphasizing the multidirectional networks that connected the Tamil region to the Indian Ocean world, moving to a more focused discussion of the Ainnurruvar merchant association. Chapter Two, "Of Symbols and Stones," studies the Ainnurruvar eulogy as blending of text and object, analyzing its literary precursors and sculptural expressions to show that both elite and non-elite merchant cultures are represented. Chapter Three, "Constructing Community in Stone," examines temples commissioned by the Ainnurruvar, and argues that their Drāviḍa-style constituted a transregional architectural phenomenon that signaled a common identity among its patrons. Finally, Chapter Four, "A Shiva Temple in Medieval Quanzhou," works to recover the ruined Shiva temple's visual logic and its patrons' place in Quanzhou society.

The dissertation's title, "*Constructing Communities*," has a dual meaning. Firstly, it refers to the dynamic process through which mobile, mercantile groups related to each

other and other populations. Merchants forged ties in south India and beyond through the use of architectural and sculptural mediums; by creating their lived environment in stone and prose, merchants transported memories and culture to new locales, transforming their identities through replication and reinterpretation of familiar spaces. Architecture and sculpture expressed their ambitions and ideology to a wider audience, but also provided tangible guidelines for internal self-fashioning. Secondly, the title addresses the historian's fraught task of reconstructing the past through diverse and always fragmentary material. The scaffolding of this constructive process is perhaps more visible in the following study, as it raises even more questions than it answers, but I hope that at the very least it sheds light on the rich possibilities of cross-cultural research.

CHAPTER 1: TAMIL MERCHANTS IN WORLD HISTORY

This chapter situates Tamil merchants in their wider geographic and historical contexts. First, I outline the geographic and seasonal factors affecting the Tamil and Indian Ocean regions.¹ Second, I focus on merchants from the Tamil region, narrowing onto the Ainnurruvar, a transregional South Indian merchant organization active between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. While the organization has been the subject of several studies, it has not been situated within larger conversations about the structure and organization of premodern South Indian polities. Building on earlier conceptions of “ritual polity,” I propose the category of “transregional polity” to describe the Ainnurruvar’s social and political practices.²

Geography and Seasons

Sandwiched between the Gulf, Red Sea, and Bay of Bengal, south India was an important transit point for maritime traffic circulating between the Middle East and China; several studies consequently have dubbed it the “hinge” or “fulcrum” of the Indian Ocean.³ The South Indian peninsula is defined by a huge triangular plateau, beginning in the Deccan’s Vindhya Mountains and extending to the subcontinent’s

¹ This section owes much to Michael Pearson's, *The Indian Ocean, Seas in History* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-26.

² As James Heitzman writes, “the paradigm of the ‘ritual polity’ suggests that cultural meaning may explain the formation of the early state, the legitimation of its authority, and the spatial configurations of its political units.” In “Ritual Polity and Economy: The Transactional Network of an Imperial Temple in Medieval South India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, no. 1/2 (1991), 23.

³ Abu Lughod adds that the Indian Ocean constituted a “great ‘highway’ for the migration of peoples, for cultural diffusion, and for economic exchange.” Abu-Lughod, p. 261, while Pearson terms it the “fulcrum,” *Indian Ocean*, p. 53

southernmost tip (Map 2). The Eastern and Western Ghats stretch from north to south, dividing the region, but are nowhere impassable.⁴ The mountain ranges separate low lying coastal plains from the slightly elevated plateau, producing two distinct coastlines: the Malabar Coast in modern Kerala, and the Coromandel Coast in modern Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.⁵ Several rainfed rivers flow eastward from the Western Ghats towards the Bay of Bengal, with the Krishna and Godavari rivers in the north and the Kaveri, Palar, and Vaigai in the south.

The Coromandel coastline has no natural harbors and constant high surf, making docking ships there particularly treacherous. Still, many ports are known to have existed in early south India, including Arikamedu, Kaveripattinam, Periyapattinam, Alakankulam, Korakai, and Kayalpattinam.⁶ Most harbors were located at the mouths of rivers that eventually connected to the Bay of Bengal, providing protection from the open sea to

⁴ Michael Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 16.

⁵ The name, Coromandel, derives from a Portuguese corruption of the Tamil term, “Cholamandalam,” literally, “land (circle) of the Cholas.”

⁶ These are confirmed by archaeological remains and textual references. For an overview of port locations in ancient southern India, see Himanshu Prabha Ray, and Jean-François Salles, eds. *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1996.

Chinese, Arabic, and European traveler diaries name many ports along the southern peninsula, and scholars have devoted much work to identifying these locations. For example, see Noboru Karashima’s identification of “Dabadan” in Chinese sources with modern Periyapattinam in southern Tamil Nadu. “Trade Relations between South India and China During 13th-14th Century A.D.,” *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations* 1 (1989): 59-81.

Much scholarship exists on individual ports, although the majority awaits systematic archaeological excavation. For a geographical perspective on the selection of ports, see Jean Deloche, “Geographical Considerations in the Localisation of Ancient Sea-Ports in India,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 20, no. 4 (1983): 439-48 and “Études Sur La Circulation En Inde. Iv: Notes Sur Les Sites De Quelques Ports Anciens Du Pays Tamoul.” *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 74 (1985): 153-57. For studies of individual ports, see Roderich Ptak’s “Yuan and Early Ming Notices on the Kayal Area in South India,” in *China's Seaborne Trade with South and Southeast Asia (1200-1750)*, edited by Roderich Ptak, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 137-56, as well as Vimala Begeley’s numerous studies of Arikamedu, especially, *The Ancient Port of Arikamedu: New Excavations and Researches 1989-1992*, Vol. 22, Mémoires Archéologiques. (Pondicherry: Centre d'histoire et d'archéologie, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004).

moored ships. Attesting to this fact, Marco Polo mentions ‘Palayakayal,’ which translates as ‘Old Lagoon,’ as a major port.⁷

The monsoon’s importance to Indian Ocean travel cannot be overstated. Every year, winds push southwest from early June to mid-September, and northeast from November to March, producing two rainy seasons. Travelers had used the monsoons as a marker for navigating the Indian Ocean for millennia, demonstrated by numerous premodern travel accounts offering logistical and proverbial wisdom on navigating monsoons. For example, one Arab author writes that “he who leaves India on the 100th day [2 March] is a sound man, he who leaves on the 110th will be all right. However, he who leaves on the 120th is stretching the bounds of possibility, and he who leaves on the 130th is inexperienced and an ignorant gambler.”⁸

The monsoon impacted agricultural practices in the Tamil region as well; intensive periods of rainfall promoted particular methods for collecting water to cultivate wet crops such as rice paddy. Farmers developed three primary irrigation methods: man-made embankments constructed near natural depressions to contain rainwater; channeling water from rivers into man-made canals or tanks; and digging wells to underground water supplies.⁹ The topographies of individual regions determined irrigation method and farming layout. For instance, eastern districts, receiving more rainfall than western, to this day utilize interdependent water systems in their farmlands, while western farmlands

⁷ Y. Subbarayalu posits that Palaya-Kayal is “10 km to the north of Tiruchendur and about 30 km south of Tuitcorin. . . [and] 3 km interior from the coast.” See “Chinese Ceramics of Tamilnadu and Kerala Coasts,” in *Tradition and Archaeology*, 109-114.

⁸ In Michael Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 21 (footnote 25)

⁹ James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State*, (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

relied on individual tanks that divided the land into discrete units.¹⁰ Indeed, it appears that irrigation systems impacted the formation of the Tamil region's oldest political structures; Y. Subbarayalu suggests that before royal administration, groups of villages with common water networks partnered together.¹¹

In the Tamil country's littoral regions, waves constituted another deep structural element. High waves along the Coromandel coastline made it difficult for sailors who were unfamiliar with the terrain to navigate its waters. We might imagine the difficulty of sailing through an account written in 1183 by the religious pilgrim, Muhammed ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubair. When arriving at the important Gulf port of Jiddah, Jubair marvels at the captain's navigational skills writing,

The entry into [Jiddah] is difficult to achieve because of the many reefs and the windings. We observed the art of these captains and the mariners in the handling of their ships through the reefs. It was truly marvelous. They would enter the narrow channels and manage their way through them as a cavalier manages a horse that is light on the bridle and tractable. They came through in a wonderful manner that cannot be described . . .¹²

While deep structures affected the development of the Indian Ocean's interconnected regional networks, they were not wholly responsible. Advances in

¹⁰ K.C. Alexander, "Some Characteristics of the Agrarian Social Structure of Tamil Nadu." *Economic and Political Weekly* 10, no. 16 (1975), 666.

¹¹ These regions become the territorial unit known as the *nadu* in Tamil inscriptions. Y. Subbarayalu, *The Political Geography of the Chola Country*. Madras: Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, 1972, 22.

¹² Muhammed ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubair, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr (1183-1185 AC)*, trans. R.J.C. Broadhurst, London, Jonathan Cape, 1952, pp. 69 et seq. Quoted in Michael Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 19.

maritime technology between 1000-1500 CE segmented the previous east-west maritime route into port centered regional networks, producing distinct navigational circuits corresponding to the Bay of Bengal, Melaka Straits, Java Sea, South China Sea, and Sulu Sea (Maps 3 and 4). In this network, “there was no hierarchical trade structure corresponding to markets with a single clearing house or a single core with peripheries with which it traded on terms of unequal exchange. Rather, the Bay of Bengal was a poly-centric networked realm,” in which north-south movement of tropical goods was commonplace.¹³

The Indian Ocean’s segmentation resulted in shorter routes for individual ships. Whereas before 1000 CE, a single boat might have made the entire trip from the Arabian Sea to China, now it stopped in south India to transfer goods onto a new boat with a different crew, which completed the journey to southeast Asia and China. Explaining the change, Pearson suggests that traders realized the inefficiency of using one ship per voyage, since it required long respites at port waiting out the monsoon. He also acknowledges that the segmentation might have resulted from the increased power of South Indian merchant organizations, which now took charge of the goods from Arabia.¹⁴

Early Merchant History in *Tamilakam* (ca. 300 BCE-700 CE)

Early Tamil literature refers to the region between the Vengadom Hills (Tirupati in modern Andhra Pradesh) and Venadu (in southern Kerala) as *Tamilakam*, or “the

¹³ Kenneth Hall, "Ports-of-Trade, Maritime Diasporas, and Networks of Trade and Cultural Integration in the Bay of Bengal Region of the Indian Ocean: C. 1300-1500," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010), 113.

¹⁴ Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 87-88.

abode of the Tamils.¹⁵ *Tamilakam* denotes what Burton Stein has termed a cognitive region, imparting a shared cultural identity among its inhabitants, expressed in common mythic and symbolic beliefs.¹⁶ Other scholars have observed that, “classical Tamil literature is explicitly conscious about the close relationships among language, geographical territory, and culture.”¹⁷ Less studied is its converse implication, which is that a distinctly Tamil cognitive region necessitates that its inhabitants were attuned to a world much larger than their immediate surroundings. The Tamil region’s centrality to Indian Ocean trade must be held partially accountable for this cognizance.

In the third century BCE, Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor who controlled most of northern India, authored several inscriptions referring to southernmost peninsular India that mention three kingships lying outside his realm: the Chola, Pandya, and Chera. By the sixth century, *Tamilakam* consisted of four regions inhabited by the Chola, Pandya, Chera, and the newly formed Pallava dynasty. With the exception of the Chera, based in modern western Kerala, each of these territories developed around rivers: the Pallavas around the Palar, the Cholas around the Kaveri, and the Pandyas around the Vaigai. Expanding agricultural activities and the need for constant irrigation likely provided the impetus to settle in these locations. As mentioned earlier, rivers also were important to

¹⁵ This geographic description occurs in the first extant Tamil grammar, the *Tolkappiyam*, defining “the good world where Tamil is spoken (stretching from) northern Venkatam to Kumari in the South.” Martha Selby and Indira Peterson, introduction to *Tamil Geographies: Cultural Constructions of Space and Place in South India*, eds. Indira Viswanathan Peterson and Martha Ann Selby. (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 4.

¹⁶ Burton Stein, “Circulation and the Historical Geography of Tamil Country,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (1977), 7.

¹⁷ Selby and Peterson, *Tamil Geographies*, 4.

maritime trade, providing boats shelter from the open sea and uninterrupted passage upriver to the Tamil hinterland.

Archaeologists have discovered many Roman goods at these locations, which point to trade networks connecting India, Southeast Asia and the Roman west.¹⁸ For example, a pottery sherd from a storage jar, ca. first century BCE, inscribed with Tamil-Brahmi script, was discovered in Quseir-al-Qadim, an ancient Roman settlement on Egypt's Red Sea Coast.¹⁹ A terracotta sherd from Alagankulam dates from the same period, and carries a rare illustration of sea vessels frequenting the region at that time. It bears an incised outline of a Roman ship with riggings and mast, identifiable as a three-master Roman sailing ship, one of the largest ships of the time, carrying Greco-Roman goods between India and Egypt (Fig. 1.1).²⁰ By the first century, Tamil country was an important hub for overland traffic from northwest India, western maritime traffic with Arabs and Romans, and eastern maritime traffic with Southeast Asia. Roman coin hoards discovered in Karur and Coimbatore districts suggest that overland trade routes connected southern India's east and west coasts. This is confirmed by Greek and Latin sources, like *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, composed in the first century CE by an Egyptian Greek merchant, who describes the trade routes he used to travel to Africa and India, including those connecting the Kerala coast to Tamil Nadu's hinterland. A half century later, the Roman geographer, Ptolemy, writing of India's southern region, names

¹⁸ H.P. Ray, "Maritime Archaeology: An Overview" *Tradition and Archaeology*, 4.

¹⁹ "Tamil Brahmi Script in Egypt," last modified Nov 21, 2007, <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2007/11/21/stories/2007112158412400.htm>. New evidence continually points to earlier dates for international maritime commerce.

²⁰ Iravatham Mahdevan, *Early Tamil Epigraphy from the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century A.D.*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.

two ports (which scholars identify with modern Nagapattinam and Kaveripattinam), and refers to the Cholas as the “Soras.”²¹

Many literary texts refer to the prosperity and cosmopolitanism of Kaveripattinam (Puhar). *The Manimekhalai*, one of most important epics from the Tamil “Sangam” school of literature (ca. 300 BCE-300 CE), is set in Kaveripattinam; intriguingly, its author, Shattan, was both a renowned poet and noble merchant. Shattan likens the city to a beautiful woman whose many adornments reflect the city’s prosperous maritime trade:

The moats filled with clear water, embellished with innumerable flowers, sounding with the song of a thousand kinds of bird, form a ring around her ankle. The surrounding walls, commanded by towers, are her diamond-studded girdle. The gates, surmounted by staffs with flags flying are her shoulders laden with many necklaces . . . The vast palace, thousands of years old, of matchless splendor, commanding the city, the residence of the Chola king who wears a necklace of orchid tree leaves . . .²²

Other passages in the *Manimekhalai* explicitly mention merchants working in bustling bazaars, conducting business as they “murmured their prayers, making offerings of flowers.”²³ Another Sangam period work, the *Pattinappalai* (ca. 100 BCE-100 CE) lists the exotic Indian Ocean goods available in Kaveripattinam. The city “had an abundance of horses brought over the water, sacks of black pepper brought [overland] in carts,

²¹ Sastri, *The Colas*, (Madras: University of Madras, 1935), 22. See also K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India; From Megasthenes to Ma Huan*, 1st ed. (Madras: University of Madras, 1972).

²² Cattamar, Alain Daniélou, and T.V. Kopalayyar. *Manimekhalai: The Dancer with the Magic Bowl*, (New Delhi, India: Penguin Books, 1993), 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 34.

gemstones and gold from the northern mountains, and sandalwood and eaglewood from the western hills, pears from the southern seas and coral from the eastern seas, grains from the regions of the Ganga and Kaveri, foodgrains from Ceylon, and the products of Burma and other rare and great commodities.²⁴

The *Pattinapallai*'s reference to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) opens discussion onto the Tamil region's relationships with Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Sri Lanka, although not conceptually part of *Tamilakam*, shared many commonalities with it well before the Chola king, Rajendra I, seized control of the region in the eleventh century. Notices in Greek, Roman, Persian, Arabic, and Chinese language sources, archaeological excavations, and epigraphy—written in early Brahmi, Sinhalese, and Tamil scripts—provide information about the many trade emporia along its coasts and hinterland. Indian Ocean trade was crucial to Sinhalese economy, demonstrated by the variety of foreign coin hoards discovered there dating from the first century onwards.²⁵ Additionally, two Sri Lankan Buddhist narratives, the *Dipavamsa* (ca. fifth century CE) and the *Mahavamsa* (ca. sixth century CE) describe merchandise and personnel circulating between Sri Lanka and Myanmar.²⁶

Further east in southern Thailand, the Andaman Coast, which spans the Thai-Malay peninsula, was a stopping point for ships sailing the Indian Ocean route and became a lively trading center. Scholars have discovered several smaller objects dating from the early centuries of the first millennium and inscribed with Tamil-Brahmi script,

²⁴ *Pattinappalai*, lines 185-192, quoted in Kanakalatha Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant: Evolution of Merchant Capitalism in the Coromandel*, (Chennai: Orient Longman, 1999), 15.

²⁵ See Osmund Bopearachchi's "Seafaring in the Indian Ocean: Archaeological Evidence from Sri Lanka," in *Tradition and Archaeology*, 59-77.

²⁶ Malini Dias, "Historical Relations of Ancient Sri Lanka and Myanmar," *AMCA*, 172.

from which the existence of Tamil speaking settlements has been interpreted. The earliest find is a pottery sherd that has been dated to about the second century CE, which is inscribed with fragmentary letters that are possibly part of the Tamil word for monk.²⁷ Another small rectangular stone bears a short inscription in third century CE Tamil-Brahmi script, identifying it as “the great goldsmith’s stone,” (*perumpatan kal*), implying that Tamil speaking artisans had settled in Thailand by this time.²⁸ Tamil merchant communities also existed in Lobu Tua (Barus), Sumatra as indicated by a late eleventh century Tamil inscription, which relates the local Ainnurruvar organization’s decision to tax merchant ships docked at port.²⁹

Missionary activity and religious pilgrimage also impacted the formation of Indian Ocean networks. Buddhist monks from the subcontinent flooded Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia at the beginning of the first millennium, traveling as far as China by the first century CE.³⁰ Most famously the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims Faxian and Xuanzang authored travel diaries describing their voyages to the subcontinent in the fourth and seventh centuries respectively, emphasizing India’s cultural sophistication.³¹ Faxian’s is

²⁷ The three letters are ‘*Tu Ra O . . .*’, which might be part of the word ‘*turavon*.’ Boonyarit Chaisuwan, “Early Contacts between India and the Andaman Coast,” in *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, eds. Pierre Yves Manguin, A. Mani, and Geoff Wade, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Manohar), 89.

²⁸ In 1992, Noboru Karashima et al. translated the greenish rectangular stone from Khuan Luk Pat, which is now located in the Wat Khlong Thom Museum, Krabi province, southern Thailand. “Tamil Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China,” *AMCA*, 10 and 156.

²⁹ Y. Subbarayalu, “The Tamil Merchant-Guild Inscription at Barus, Indonesia: A Rediscovery,” *AMCA*, 20-21.

³⁰ This was not the first contact between India and China; merchants had navigated these paths as early as the second century BCE, when Han Chinese official recorded their plans in the *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian) to take over the trade route connecting southwestern China to India. Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, 3. See Chapter 5 for a lengthier account of contact between India and China.

³¹ See Faxian, Trans. Henri Giles, *The Travels of Fa-Hsien (399-414 A.D.) or, Record of the Buddhistic*

the sole extended account of Indian Ocean travel from this time (415 CE), and contains a description of a boat ride between Sri Lanka and Srivijaya, in which two hundred Brahmanical merchants accompanied him.³²

While overseas commerce was essential to the Tamil country, it was not the only factor in its socioeconomic development. R. Champakalakshmi has argued that “external stimuli” provided the primary motivation for internal development within Tamil country. The surge of coastal and overseas trade along the Coromandel Coast between 300 BCE and 300 CE, she writes, prompted an “urban revolution” and the creation of “trade enclaves.”³³ In this narrative, urban centers in the Tamil hinterland developed in order to accommodate increased traffic towards the coast. The assumption of unidirectional movement from village to town overlooks complex interactions among multiple centers, however.³⁴ Sanjay Subrahmanyam has proposed a tripartite model for analyzing trade, differentiating among coastal, overland, and overseas networks; all of these pathways exhibit “inter-dependence” and “independence,” an observation which overturns the assumption that inland villages were less significant than ports in India’s commerce.³⁵

Kingdoms, (London: Routledge & Paul, 1956); Sally Hovey Wriggins, *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004).

³² Michel Pearson, 55.

³³ R. Champakalakshmi’s suggestion that the “urban revolution” was followed by either urban ‘devolution’ or “breakdown of earlier tribal forms” between the third and sixth centuries CE is also problematic. She maintains that the Kalabrahmas (i.e. a dynasty of evil kings) invaded Tamil country, destroying social and political institutions, when no written records exist for this period. See *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37.

³⁴ The conception of limited movement of goods, i.e. from village to town (small to big), simplifies the complex reality of trade in premodern south India. This model appears in, ‘Inland trade’ in Habib and Tapan Raychaudhuri eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Volume I, 325-59.

³⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650*, (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 46-90.

The unidirectional trade model also neglects important evidence from the Tamil country's interior that contradicts direct funneling between coast and hinterland.³⁶ These occur in the first written references to South Indian merchants, appearing on the walls of rudimentary stone shelters and cave dwellings in the former Pandyan region of Tamil Nadu, near to the modern city of Madurai. Iravatham Mahadevan's translations of these Tamil-Brahmi script inscriptions inform us that Tamil speaking merchants patronized many religious and cultural institutions, indexing complex inland trade networks not connected to ports.³⁷ The first known example comes from Mangulam village near Madurai, where a Tamil-Brahmi script inscription (ca. second century BCE), which records that a merchant association (*nigama*) sponsored the construction of the cave's stone beds. The northern origin of the term *nigama* and the fact that most of the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions have Buddhist or Jain associations "may indicate a northern origin for at least a section of the traders."³⁸ A more significant example exists at Alagarmalai, located about twenty kilometers northeast of Madurai, in a cave reached after a steep

³⁶ Generally speaking, commercial and social networks do not function within such neatly defined geographic zones and temporalities, and much information suggests that the *Tamilakam*'s agriculture and economy developed unevenly. Moreover, Champakalakshmi bases her argument on flawed interpretations of early Tamil Sangam period literature, especially the concept of *tinai*. Chamapakalakshmi defines *tinai* as different "eco-systems" of *Tamilakam*, extracting data about the different types of landscapes and people that comprised early Tamil Nadu. As scholars like Martha Ann Selby have noted, *tinai* is a more nebulous concept. Selby prefers to define *tinai* as "context," where emotion is the only fixed quality. As she writes, "this context is sweeping, and includes geographical space, time, and everything that grows, develops, and lives within that space and time, including emotion." Martha Ann Selby, "Dialogues of Space, Desire, and Gender in Tamil Cankam Poetry," in *Tamil Geographies*, 25.

³⁷ Meera Abraham reads the inscriptions' Jain-related content as evidence of early trading connections between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. She reaches this conclusion on the assumption that Jain establishments "were often established in areas of commercial importance" and that the disciples of Bhadrabahu brought Jainism to the Tamil country by the third century BCE. Abraham, 49.

³⁸ Kesavan Veluthat, *The Early Medieval in South India*, 25. On the term *nigama*, see Romila Thapar, who records multiple donations made to Buddhist chaityas in the western Deccan from the Maurya period onwards. In these instances the donors are described as being from the *nigama*, which has been interpreted as a market center. "Patronage in Community," in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed, Barbara Stoler Miller, (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26.

ascent through rocky hillsides (Fig. 1.2). An inscription records that around the first century BCE, a group of merchants spent one night or more sleeping in the cave's stone beds. The cave's high ceilings provided shelter from the dry climate, while a deep, freshwater pool quenched their thirst. Multiple weatherworn Tamil-Brahmi script inscriptions are scrawled across the ceiling. They record that merchants, each identified by their wares (sugar, salt, iron implements, and textiles), donated money to the nearby Jain monastery, which shows that merchants specializing in the sale of particular goods traveled together within a single organization.³⁹ Thus, the earliest textual references to merchants in the Tamil region record them acting as architectural and cultural patrons, endowing monuments, institutions, and objects in order to establish and elevate their burgeoning sociopolitical identities.

The historical record essentially vanishes during the "Kalabhra" interregnum (300-600).⁴⁰ Reliable records reappear after 600 CE, most of which are dated according to Pallava dynastic years.⁴¹ The Pallava worldview incorporated aspects of north Indian political order, which viewed kings as upholders of *dharma* (morality) and ritual purity. Champakalakshmi observes that no *vaisya* (merchant) caste existed in the region at this time. She proposes that this absence resulted from the growth of Brahman-centric power

³⁹ Mahadevan, 15.

⁴⁰ Hetzmann suggests that kings in the Deccan temporarily displaced the South Indian kings' seat of power (Hetzmann, *Gifts of Power*, 2). Veluthat proposes an alternative reading, in which Brahmanical ideology solidified its grip on South Indian society, resulting in major social changes, including a turn to agriculturalism. He dismisses the common interpretations (e.g. Sastri) of northern invaders or Jain hegemony. Veluthat, *The Early Medieval in South India*, 45-7.

⁴¹ The Pallavas migrated from neighboring Andhra Pradesh, eventually settling in northern Tamil Nadu, making Kanchipuram their capital.

networks between the seventh and ninth centuries.⁴² By the eighth and ninth centuries, south Indian commercial networks were deeply entrenched in Southeast Asia. Jan Wisseman Christie's analysis of Javanese records, for example, shows that by the late ninth and early tenth centuries, relations between India and Java were so entrenched that inscriptions classified Indian merchants according to regional affiliation. Merchants came from "the east coast districts of what are now Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and southern Orissa . . . These three regions remained a constant in the Javanese lists from the ninth to the fourteenth century."⁴³

The ninth through thirteenth centuries saw a dramatic expansion of trading networks in India and abroad. Many inscriptions from this period contain detailed lists describing accurate pricing of commercial goods, duties, and tax laws, created and ratified by associations of merchants, suggesting their sophistication and autonomy. The largest of these was the Ainnurruvar (referred to as the Ayyavole Five Hundred in Kannada), which Y. Subbarayalu and N. Karashima have defined broadly as a "supra-local organization of South Indian and Sri Lankan merchants."⁴⁴

⁴² Champakalakshmi concludes that the "growth of the brahmanical *agrahara* in an agricultural setting, where trade was not a very important factor in the economy of these regions at this stage and the number of communities dependent on trade must have been fairly small to have been practically ignored in the records of this period." *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization*, 42.

⁴³ An 883 inscription from Kalinguran, Kedu in central Java lists foreigners residing at Javanese ports. These are: "mainland Southeast Asians from Campa (Champa), Remman (Ramanyadesa in Mon Lower Burma), and Kmira (Cambodia); the listed South Asians came from Kling (Kalinga), Aryya (Aryapura/Ayyavole), Pandikira (in Karnataka), and perhaps Singhala (Sri Lanka)." Jan Wisseman Christie, "The Medieval Tamil-Language Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998), 244. Christie notes that many Javanese inscriptions emphasize the popularity of South Indian block printed textiles, which presents another fruitful avenue for future research of Tamil merchant material culture. See Christie, "Texts and Textiles in 'Medieval' Java," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 80 (1993): 181-211.

⁴⁴ N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, "Ainnurruvar: A Supra-local Organization," *AMCA*, 72.

The Ainnurruvar ('The Five Hundred Members')

The following section analyzes the Ainnurruvar's organization and structure through inscriptions. The earliest references to the organization date from 800 CE and were discovered on the Lad Khan and Gaudara Gudi temples in Aihole, Karnataka. Both inscriptions are somewhat opaque because the donors' title, 'the Five Hundred,' designates a group of Brahmin priests, not merchants.⁴⁵ Connection with the merchant organization is undeniable, however, as later Ainnurruvar inscriptions frequently mention the group's origin in Aihole, referring to the merchants as the "Five Hundred *svāmins* (priests) of Aihole"⁴⁶ and as the "sons of Durga, the goddess of Ayyapolil (Ayyavole or Aihole)." By the tenth century, the Ainnurruvar had become a transregional mercantile corporate body, their activities spanning south India. Most inscriptions appear on temples, marking important donations by individuals or groups of members, but some also appear on freestanding planted stones (studied in the next chapter). Membership crossed sectarian lines; while the majority of Ainnurruvar donations describe patronage of Shaivite or Vaisnavite institutions, several inscriptions describe donations made to mosques, Buddhist, and Jain temples.

Inscriptions mention the Ainnurruvar in various ways. Many contain partial or entire versions of the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* (eulogy), an elaborate and surprisingly consistent eulogy describing the fame and merit of the organization. At other times, Ainnurruvar members appear as signatories within a larger list. The first inscription featuring the Ainnurruvar as a merchant organization appears in 927 at Munisandai in

⁴⁵ The inscriptions record donations made by the Five Hundred *Chaturvēdins* or *mahājanas*, meaning Brahman priest. *AMCA*, 227-8.

⁴⁶ For example, see Sirasangi inscription from Belgaum District, Karnataka (1186 CE) in *AMCA*, 262-263.

Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu, where they donated funds for a temple tank.⁴⁷ Individuals also identified themselves as members by incorporating the organization's name into their (its) own personal title or by naming places and things after it. For instance, in the town of Virachchilai, in Pudukkottai District of Tamil Nadu, an "Ainnurruvar Peraiyar" and "Ainnurruva Devan" sold a piece of land named "Ainnurruva Mangalam" in 1282.⁴⁸ The respective suffixes, peraiyar and devan, connote two males using Ainnurruvar as a distinguished title.

Distribution of Inscriptions

The following section maps the geographical and temporal distribution of South Indian merchant organizations.⁴⁹ I divide the ninth through fourteenth centuries into four sub-periods, "which correspond to the political fortunes of the [Chola] dynasty and to the broad outlines of development in political economy."⁵⁰ I have added a fifth sub-period (1279-1400), as merchant inscriptions continue to be found in large numbers until approximately 1400. I illustrate each of these sub-periods with a map showing inscriptional sites (also see Map 5 for reference).

⁴⁷ P. Shanmugam and Y. Subbarayalu, "Texts of Select Inscriptions of the Merchant Guilds," *AMCA*, 228.

⁴⁸ *IPS* 393 and 421.

⁴⁹ I have used Subbarayalu and Karashima's list of inscriptions from *AMCA*, but excluded those postdating 1400, which appear sporadically.

⁵⁰ Heitzman elaborates: "Sub-period one (849-985) was a preliminary stage when the Cholas originated, weathered major political storms, and consolidated their control over the central part of the Tamil country. Sub-period two (985-1070) saw the rapid expansion of Chola power and the zenith of its influence under the greatest of its kings. Sub-period three (1070-1178) was initiated by the joining of the Chola and the eastern Chalukya thrones, and thus the general consolidation of the Cholas' largest power base. Generally, however, this was a time of some retrenchment and a growing, if subdued, political dissolution within the empire. Sub-period four (1178-1279) began with Kulottunga III trying to hold on under intensified pressure from outside and within, leading at the end of his reign of the rapid collapse of the Chola political system." Heitzman, *Gifts of Power*, 21.

Period 1: 849-985 (Maps 6-7)

The vast majority of inscriptions are concentrated in the Chola heartland on both banks of the Kaveri River between Tanjavur and Kumbakonam. Two isolated inscriptions are found in coastal cities in Kerala, and there is a single inscription from Takuapa, southern Thailand.

Period 2: 985-1070 (Maps 8-9)

There is a leap in the number of inscriptions, the majority of which are found in Tamil Nadu. Inscriptions still cluster around the Kaveri, but the most noticeable increase is further to the west around Tiruchirappalli and Karur Districts. Pockets of inscriptions appear around Pudukkottai and Tirunelveli districts.

The first Ainnurruvar inscriptions are found in Karnataka, but are restricted to southern Mysore and southern Dharwad districts.

Period 3: 1070-1178 (Maps 10-12)

Inscriptions in Tamil Nadu decrease visibly, while Karnataka experiences a sudden profusion of them, most of which are concentrated in the north.

In contrast to the last two periods, there is virtually no activity around the Kaveri in Tamil Nadu. Inscriptions appear in regions south of Pudukkottai near to Madurai. Additionally, a cluster of inscriptions appears around inland Erode District. The first Ainnurruvar inscriptions appear in Sri Lanka's central region and west coast. A single inscription appears in Barus, Sumatra.

Inscriptions continue to concentrate in southern Mysore, although mostly between Kollegal and Chamarajnagar districts. Meanwhile, there appears to have been continuous expansion to northern Karnataka, with a huge number of inscriptions appearing between Davanagere and Bijapur. The majority of these are concentrated in the west, especially near Kolhapur.

Period 4: 1178-1279 (Maps 13-15)

By the late twelfth century, merchant inscriptions reappear in Tamil Nadu around the Kaveri, as in periods one and two, but are closer to Tanjavur district. They have also expanded into the southern coast, especially the Madurai region. Inscriptions also are recovered from northern Sri Lanka.

Inscription locations in the Karnataka region remain constant with those from period three, with nodes in southern Mysore, Bangalore, Davanagere, and Bijapur, although sites have shifted slightly eastward.

New for this period is a number of inscriptions discovered southeast of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, the most numerous of which come from Vishakhapatnam, a well-known port during this time.

Period 5: 1279-1400 (Maps 16-17)

In the final period, we see continued development of Tamil region sites in the Kaveri delta region and Pudukkottai district. There is also an inscriptional node east of Coimbatore. Scattered inscriptions occur along the coastal circuit between modern Karaikkal and Chennai.

In Karnataka, inscriptions decrease sharply, though not in the strongholds of Mysore and Bangalore. The previous centers, Davanagere and Bijapur, are emptied and we find the only pocket of inscriptions near Hospet.

Inscriptions continue to be found in Andhra Pradesh, though further southwest than in period four.

To summarize, epigraphical distribution varies according to time and region. Select areas receive high amounts of mercantile patronage within different sub-periods; dense clusters of inscriptions in these areas suggest centralized nodes i.e. “activity centers” of mercantile activity. These include Tamil Nadu’s Kaveri and Pudukkottai regions, southern Karnataka’s Bangalore and Mysore districts, and northern Karnataka’s Davanagere and Bijapur districts (Map 18).

While the reasons behind frequent mercantile migration are unclear, it is likely that they initially “depended on states for the expansion of their operations.” Daud Ali has suggested that merchants first migrated south from Aihole into the Tamil region during the Rastrakuta’s tenth century incursions.⁵¹ The merchant inscriptions’ distribution pattern then mirrors the Cholas’ rise to power, appearing first in the Chola heartland of the Kaveri Delta Region, and expanding north into southern Karnataka at the beginning of the eleventh century, when Rajaraja I raided Talakad, the Ganga capital in southern

⁵¹ Daud Ali, "Between Market and Court: The Careers of Two Courtier Merchants in the Twelfth-Century Deccan," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010): 189.

Karnataka.⁵² Multiple eleventh century Tamil inscriptions on newly constructed Dravida style temples attest that the southeastern Karnataka region was incorporated culturally into Chola territory during this period. The initial eleventh century appearance of inscriptions in Sri Lanka and southeast Asia probably resulted from Chola military prowess: beginning in 993, Rajaraja I launched campaigns into Sri Lanka, which his son, Rajendra I, continued during his own reign. Rajendra I expanded further east than his father, raiding Malaysian peninsula ports in 1017 and 1025. These raids demonstrate Rajendra I's commitment to commercial expansion in the Indian Ocean, for by seizing control of Malaysian ports, Rajendra I wrested power away from the Srivijayan empire (the Southeast Asian kingdom based in modern southern Malaysia), who were the Cholas' chief adversaries in conducting trade with China. Attesting to the fierce competition between the two entities, Chinese records reveal the Srivijayans' direct efforts to block south Indian merchants from accessing Song China markets.⁵³

Meanwhile, merchant associations operating in Karnataka appear to have veered away from Chola operations by the mid-eleventh century, expanding to the north. Between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there is a surprising dearth of inscriptions in the Tamil region, paired with a sudden explosion of them in Karnataka. Merchants continue to expand into Karnataka's northern regions until the thirteenth century. Ali suggests that many merchants were closely allied with the Hoysalas of Dorasamudra, especially during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and several inscriptions attest to

⁵² Abraham, 54.

⁵³ Tansen Sen, "The Military Campaigns of Rajendra Chola and the Chola-Srivijaya-China Triangle," in *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, eds. Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany, and Vijay Sakhuja, Singapore: ISEAS, 2009, pp. 61-75.

Karnataka based merchants building careers for themselves within royal courts. Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Tamil country, merchant inscriptions continue to increase even as the Chola monarchy declined. Kenneth Hall posits that during this time, the power of regional centers and local “lords” including “merchants who were able to establish an early association with rising local magnates,” increased dramatically and further destabilized the Chola monarchy.⁵⁴

Challenges in Defining the Ainnurruvar

Defining the Ainnurruvar as a distinct group has advantages and shortcomings. The main advantage is that by studying the corpus of inscriptions as a discrete unit, we acknowledge that premodern merchant actors self-identified as part of a larger organization, one that they imagined as continuous with local identities. In other words, by identifying as members of the Ainnurruvar, merchants conceived of themselves as belonging to a cognitive region that was much larger than their immediate surroundings. The major shortcoming, however, is the implication that the organization functioned consistently and within discrete spheres. Under scrutiny, the organization was not centrally organized, making it difficult to describe the Ainnurruvar’s precise structure and organization. I outline the larger issues that complicate definition of the Ainnurruvar in point form below.

Size. In comparison to other premodern South Indian polities, the Ainnurruvar’s inscriptional realm is enormous and unwieldy, covering an area of around 612 miles measuring from north to south. The northernmost inscription appears at Warangal,

⁵⁴ Hall, *Trade and Statecraft*, 4.

Andhra Pradesh, and the southernmost in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, with several inscriptions appearing in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Their geographic reach is astonishing, encompassing territories associated with the Rastrakuta, Western Chalukya of Kalyan, Eastern Chalukya, Hoysala, Ganga, Yadava, Kakatiya, Chola, Chera, and Pandya dynasties.

Networks. Scholars have written extensively on transactional networks in premodern south India, identified through analyzing temple inscriptions. James Heitzman, for example, maps the transactional network of Rajaraja I's temple in Tanjavur by recording the type and place of origin of numerous endowments. He finds that the majority of donations to the temple came from within the Kaveri Delta Region, "a rough isosceles triangle with an area of approximately 7,000 square kilometers."⁵⁵ In the Ainnurruvar's case, scanty epigraphical texts preclude a similar study. Isolated inscriptions, such as at Piranmalai village in Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu, contain long lists of individual donors who identify their home towns (often with distant places), but these few sources are insufficient for reconstructing extensive transactional networks.⁵⁶

Authority. No Ainnurruvar inscription references a central authority (group or individual) as responsible for regulating political and economic activities.⁵⁷ Moreover,

⁵⁵ Donations included foodstuffs, livestock and money as well as humans, such as temple dancers, service workers, and priests. See Heitzman, "Ritual Polity and Economy," 51.

⁵⁶ For Piranmalai translation see P. Shanmugam and Y. Subbarayalu, "Texts of Select Inscriptions," *AMCA*, 275-283.

⁵⁷ Meera Abraham provides an excellent overview of arguments for and against centralized administration. She records that A. Appadorai, T.V. Mahalingam, and LD. Barnett, interpreted the title 'Five Hundred,' as denoting 500 individuals of an "apex group" that controlled its members. K.N. Sastri merely described them as "the most celebrated" guild. K. Indrapala interpreted them as a "loosely organized body," without

no charter enumerates the criteria for membership in the association.⁵⁸ Numerous inscriptions attest that Ainnurruvar members partnered with other merchant and village organizations, recording decisions made in local villages, and, less frequently, inter-regional meetings. For instance, a ca. 1200 inscription from Vahalkada in Anuradhapura District in Sri Lanka, records that the Ainnurruvar, in partnership with several other merchant organizations as well as a local branch of warriors, convened to honor the latter's heroism. The warriors had protected the townspeople from a greedy chieftan's continued monetary extortion, and multiple groups gathered to commemorate their bravery by planting a stone in their honor.⁵⁹

Partnerships. Although the Ainnurruvar was the most frequently mentioned merchant organization, it was not the only one of its kind. For centuries, Tamil merchants had operated within diverse trading associations, several of which have been the focus of individual studies. In particular, the Anjuvannam and the Manigramam merchant organizations are mentioned independently in a number of inscriptions.⁶⁰ Quite frequently, especially from the twelfth century onwards, the Ainnurruvar name would be

central administration, as did G. S. Dikshit, who believed that the association "formed small and workable federations extending over a district or two." Abraham, 74.

⁵⁸ Two written texts, currently located in Kerala, describe or allude to merchant organization charters, but do not mention the Ainnurruvar. The Syrian Christian church at Kottayam possesses an undated copper plate (which interestingly references an otherwise unspecified group as the "Ārunūrruvar" i.e. the 600) that records the Anjuvanam and Manigramam's '72 rights and privileges,' elaborating upon the organization's rules and regulations. At the bottom of the plate, we find individual signatures in Pahlavi, Arabic, and Hebrew scripts. Another copper plate from Cochin in Kerala, dated 1000 CE and known as the "Cochin Jewish copper plate of Bhaskara Ravi," grants "the Anjuvannam's 72 rights" to an individual named 'Issuppu Irappan' i.e. Joseph Raban. In Y. Subbarayalu, "Anjuvannam: A Maritime Trade Guild of Medieval Times," *Kaveri: Studies in Epigraphy, Archaeology and History : Professor Y. Subbarayalu Felicitation Volume*, (Chennai: Panpattu Veliyiittakam, 2001), 145-146.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 1 (28) for full translation.

⁶⁰ See Subbarayalu for an analysis of the Anjuvannam and its possible ties to the Arabian Ocean in "Anjuvannam," For an account of the Manigramam see Meera Abraham.

accompanied by several other merchant organizations, individuals, and institutions. In some cases, the Ainnurruvar was clearly the predominant organization, with other individuals and organizations listed as subsidiaries, leading N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu to suggest that the Ainnurruvar was an umbrella organization that incorporated smaller organizations. While this doubtlessly occurred, it was not always the case, as the Ainnurruvar also appeared as an equal or lesser signatory party. Thus, while it is certain that the Ainnurruvar sometimes incorporated other groups, it remains unclear if these organizations were subsumed permanently, or if their listing as subsidiary groups reflected isolated instances of inter-mercantile partnerships.⁶¹ That being said, because of the Ainnurruvar's extensive geographic reach and frequent interaction with other mercantile organizations, it seems likely that their institutional practices impacted other merchant groups. In other words, by focusing on the Ainnurruvar, I argue that we can infer larger patterns about how merchant organizations functioned in general.

Medieval South Indian Polity

In *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State*, James Heitzman provides the best summary of the century-long debate over the structure of 'Chola polity' (849-1279).⁶² Though ostensibly concerned with the political structure of the Chola monarchy, these debates opened conversations about many other social groups' involvement in regional politics, including merchants. Heitzman emerges with a description of the

⁶¹ Subbarayalu and Karashima regard the Nanadesi, Padienen-vishayam, and Padinen-bhumi organizations as the same as the Ainnurruvar. The Manigramam and Anjuvannam guilds are also included in the study, but their inscriptions are much fewer in number. N. Karashima, "South Indian and Sri Lankan Inscriptions Relating to the Merchant Guilds," *AMCA*, 4.

⁶² See Heitzman's first chapter, "The Chola Empire: History Theory, Method," in *Gifts of Power*, especially pp. 11-20.

‘Chola Empire’ that weaves together many of these arguments. His description of medieval south Indian political structure focuses on the importance of local ‘lords,’ whose ritual practices supported the dynastic ambitions of kings. The concept of ‘lordship,’ Heitzman writes,

suggests that attributes of birth and merit, reinforced by ritual demonstrations, supported landed and commercial elites who projected themselves as a separate and superior group . . . Their authority, resting on land and labour, received legitimation and support through ritualized action ranging from religious donations to military campaigns. . . This assemblage of lords, emerging primarily from the agrarian economy, supported dynastic ambitions of kings. As the leaders of assembled lords, kings could not easily rework institutions into centralized bureaucratic entities.⁶³

In emphasizing that landed and commercial elites commanded much power, Heitzman restores agency to a host of individuals involved in medieval South Indian politics. As Heitzman demonstrates, the Chola kings’ political strategies varied according to time and space, including increased centralization around 1000, when kings “intervened directly in the extraction of agrarian produce from the central area of their empire,” thus changing the previous relations of production.⁶⁴ In response, local lords tightened control over their land to prevent future royal taxation, eventually creating “a new level of production and property relations which undermined [the Chola] polity.”⁶⁵ Merchants, in this vision,

⁶³ Heitzman, *Gifts of Power*, 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 218.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

played crucial roles in determining the fate of the Cholas by reaching into their own networks to topple the status quo.

Heitzman's model of lordship builds on Burton Stein's previous work on the region. Stein defines *Tamilakam* as a cognitive region: a territory with more or less fixed geographic borders whose inhabitants formulate similar mythic and symbolic associations with the land.⁶⁶ Stein develops this concept in contrast to a functional region: the actual rather than imagined movement of individuals through the region.⁶⁷ Stein argues the primary functional region of administrative and political action was not the royal court, but the *nadu*, a territorial unit comprised of a group of villages. According to Stein, each *nadu* handled local affairs individually, retaining a "tribe like or segmentary character," thus forming the basis of Stein's theoretical model, the segmentary state, in which "each locality was to a high degree separate and autonomous . . . [but] the circulation of particular ritual specialists provided an overarching ideological framework which tied hundreds of these localities into a single loosely integrated entity."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Stein in turn builds on Bernard Cohn's concept of "historical regions." Historical regions are demonstrated by textual terminology such as "French *pays*, the German *Landschaft*, and the Indian *desh*." Stein, "Circulation and the Historical Geography of Tamil Country." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 1 (1977), 9. See also Bernard S. Cohn, "Regions Subjective and Objective: Their Relation to the Study of Modern Indian History and Society," in *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies: An Exploratory Study*, ed. Robert I. Crane (Durham: Duke University, no. 5, 1967), 6-7.

⁶⁷ Stein's circulatory agents are the Tamil Shaivite saints who authored devotional hymns between the sixth and tenth centuries that describe sacred sites primarily in the Kaveri delta region of Tamil Nadu. These are compiled in the *Tevaram*, in which 63 hymnists/saints (*nayanmars*) refer to a total of 537 shrines. 274 of these are the hymns' primary subjects, and 300 temples are located in the Kaveri Delta region. By mapping the holy site locations visited by the itinerant saints, Stein argues for a functional region centered on the Kaveri. Stein, "Circulation," 13.

⁶⁸ Stein, "Circulation," 16.

Though scholars adamantly criticized Stein for his lack of empirical rigor, few disagreed with the basic premise of his second proposition, that *nadus* were cognitively connected through a “ritual polity.” Ritual polity derives from early pan-Indian religious texts that describe the king’s primary obligation as upholder of *dharma*, or morality, requiring gift giving to righteous persons and institutions. Through gift exchange, Stein proposed, king and subject depended on reciprocal gift giving to ensure the *dharmic* equilibrium. Evidence for a ritual polity can be found on the most basic level of inscriptional practice, in which donors date contributions by using one or more combinations of the king’s name, title, and regnal year. Thus, all of the region’s donations automatically legitimate the king’s authority by invoking his name. Ritual gift giving between subject and king mirrored the ultimate gift exchange, which occurred between god and devotee in the temple. In religious ceremonies, the deity receives ritual service and offerings, which the mediating priest then returns to devotees as *prasadam*, proof of god’s grace.

Stein’s distinction between cognitive and functional networks is instructive for studying the Ainnurruvar, as its members seem to have been cognitively and functionally connected within a “transregional polity.” Although the Ainnurruvar had no ritual figurehead like the Chola king, there was much emphasis on belonging to a cognitive network that transcended regional boundaries. This is particularly apparent when studying the Ainnurruvar eulogy (see next chapter), which describes a set of boundaries delimiting the members’ cognitive network. These are much less straightforward than *Tamilakam*’s territorial boundaries; rather than naming actual locations demarcating the Ainnurruvar’s cognitive network, the Ainnurruvar eulogy (*praśasti*) claims that its

members' geographic affiliations were infinite, coming from "the four corners of the earth and a thousand directions." As noted above, the Ainnurruvar's functional networks remain unclear due to lack of data, but several inscriptions attest that long-distance, transregional networks sometimes connected the organization. A fourteenth century inscription from Piranmalai in Tamil Nadu's southern Ramanathapuram District records many Ainnurruvar representatives gathering from all over the Tamil region and southern Karnataka to make decisions regarding taxation rates on merchandise, for example.⁶⁹

In many other instances, however, local Ainnurruvar branches operated independently.⁷⁰ Indeed, Ainnurruvar activities were not limited to trade, and varied according to village and region. For example, several inscriptions from Jambai in Tamil Nadu's Southern Arcot district describe Ainnurruvar members serving as the village's judicial heads. A ca. 1054-5 record reports that a man was penalized a sum of 32 *kasu* as a result of having precipitated a woman's suicide. The man is identified as an overzealous tax collector, whose continued threats to the tax-evading woman caused her

⁶⁹ Y. Subbarayalu provides a full transcription in *AMCA*, pp.275-78, followed by a slightly modified version of K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer's English translation, which appeared in 'Largest Provincial Organisations in Ancient India', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* (new series) 45, pp. 29-47, 70-98, 270-86 and vol. 46, pp. 8-22.

⁷⁰ It seems that other professional organizations functioned similarly, seen in the example of the Vishwakarma kula, a transregional organization of craftsmen in medieval peninsular India. Named after Vishvakarma, the "lord of the arts" and "carpenter of the gods," the organization first appears in twelfth century inscriptions, comprising five socially and economically differentiated *jatis*, while today, the Vishvakarma comprise a distinct caste who are "dominant in the elite and prestigious domains of practice where the discourses of sastra are most refined." Vijaya Ramaswamy notes that in medieval times, "community solidarity in certain situations may have taken precedence over *jati* solidarity." Affiliation with a larger organization thus enabled Vishwakarma kula members increased mobility and power while operating within individual regions.

The full reference from the *Mahabharata* is as follows: "Viswakarma, Lord of the arts, master of a thousand crafts, carpenter of the gods and builders of their palaces divine, fashioner of every jewel, first of craftsmen by whose art men live, and whom, a great and deathless God, they continuously worship." *Mahabharata*, Adi Parva verses: 1.60.27, 1.60.28 and 1.60.29. Quoted in Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004), 548. Also see Samuel Parker, "Text and Practice in South Asian Art: An Ethnographic Perspective," *Artibus Asiae* 63, no. 1 (2003), 11.

to commit suicide by drinking poison.⁷¹ Another inscription, dated over two decades later (ca. 1065-6), records that the Ainnurruvar ordered a shepherd to make a monetary contribution to the temple, a slap on the wrist for having murdered his own wife during a quarrel.⁷² In Tiruvidaimarudur, Tanjavur district in Tamil Nadu, the local merchants were administrators of temple donations, working alongside Brahmins (*sabha*), temple priests, and clerks (*devakanmis*).⁷³ Here, the Ainnurruvar demonstrated their authority by having a *maṇḍapa* named in their honor.⁷⁴ Such autonomy might have served as a Chola state strategy to encourage of the merchants' already successful operations. Although writing at a much later time than our period, the sixteenth century Portuguese traveler Duarte Barbosa notes that the Hindu rulers along the Malabar coast appreciated the customs revenues of wealthy traders and thus left them alone.⁷⁵

Evaluating the inscriptional data suggests that the Ainnurruvar structure governance emulated the larger model of lordship characterizing the Chola state. Local Ainnurruvar branches, for the most part, operated within discrete functional networks but were affiliated with one another through common expressions of identity and ideology. As the next chapters show, these were not only communicated through inscriptions, but

⁷¹ *SII* 22, no. 80.

⁷² *SII* 22, no. 91.

⁷³ See inscriptions in *SII* 3 nos. 92 and 347.

⁷⁴ The *maṇḍapa* was destroyed in an early 20th century renovation. It was named "*Ticaiyayirattainurruvar maṇḍapa*," and commissioned by the *kaikkolar*, who probably were the Ainnurruvar's private army. *ARE* 253 of 1907. See also *SII* 19, no. 4. Tiruvidaimarudur's main temple, the Mahalingasvami, was destroyed in the 20th century so I cannot evaluate the *maṇḍapa*'s form. For more information about mercantile involvement in medieval Tiruvidaimarur, see Kenneth Hall, "Peasant State and Society in Chola Times: A View from the Tiruvidaimarudur Urban Complex," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 18, no. 3 and 4 (1981): 393-400.

⁷⁵ Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the 16th Century*, trans. Henry E.J. Stanley, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1866), 148.

through literary and artistic language. In fact, the expansiveness of the Ainnurruvar's imagined community (or cognitive network) was often a source of legitimacy and power. In contrast to the Chola monarch's ritual polity, formulated through acknowledging the overlordship of a single ruler, the Ainnurruvar stressed their transregional roots and cosmopolitan origins, turning the conventional order on its head. Intriguingly, their rejection of a definite center and assertion of the organization's porous borders allowed them to flourish in widespread places, grafting their overarching ideology onto whichever local base suited them.

CHAPTER 2: OF SYMBOLS AND STONES

The previous chapter analyzed the structure of the Ainnurruvar mercantile organization through inscriptional distribution and content. I contend that although transregional partnerships among different Ainnurruvar branches were frequent, there was no central regulating body, and individual branches had the autonomy to make decisions about business transactions and corporate partnerships. Despite the many functionally disconnected Ainnurruvar branches, however, inscriptions emphatically insist on the organization's unity, describing its members as "the Five Hundred of the Thousand Directions of the Four Quadrants of the world."¹ One of the more interesting expressions of a unified Ainnurruvar community is a panegyric prefacing many of its donations. Rich in literary allusion, the panegyric (*praśasti*) connected its members within a cognitive region by creating a cosmopolitan identity that built on preexisting visual and textual language from multiple registers of society.

The Ainnurruvar *praśasti* appears in inscriptions discovered in the modern Tamil, Karnataka, and Andhra regions, and is written in Tamil, Kannada, or Telugu, usually depending on its location. It might be more accurate, in fact, to call them "*praśastis*," because they follow no identifiable *ur* text, and individual inscriptions present many variants of the form. They exhibit common themes, language, tropes, and format, and seem to have had a limited production between 1000-1300 CE.

In crafting their *praśastis*, the Ainnurruvar adopted a pan-Indic literary form, overtly aligning themselves with royal courts, where poets had used the genre in stone

¹ This is the Ainnurruvar's full title: *Nāṇādēsi ticai āyirataiñnūruvar*.

and copper plate inscriptions as early as the first century CE to enumerate the king's genealogy and heroic feats. Daud Ali, for example, in studying the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*, has emphasized its direct borrowings from royal *praśasti*.² Its close associations with royalty are underscored by the fact that the Ainnurruvar often included the current king's *praśasti* or regnal year before inscribing their own.³ On the one hand, these borrowings attest to mercantile efforts to elevate their status through appropriation of elite imagery and syntax, and on the other, it gestures to real relationships connecting the two realms, primarily due to the royal court's dependence on mercantile groups for luxury goods.

While the desire to emulate a royal model certainly figured into the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*'s creation, it was not the only impetus. Seen from a different angle, I suggest

² *Praśastis* come under the umbrella of Sanskrit *kāvya* (literature), and are written in Prakrit and Sanskrit. They appear on caves, tank foundations, and pillars. Daud Ali has made several informative studies of *praśasti*. On the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* (emphasizing connections to the Hoysala court in the medieval Deccan), see "Between Market and Court: The Careers of Two Courtier Merchants in the Twelfth-Century Deccan," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010): 185-211. On Chola *praśasti* see "Royal Eulogy as World History: Rethinking Copper-Plate Inscriptions in Cōḷa India." In *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*, eds. Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters and Daud Ali, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169.

³ I have opted to call the Ainnurruvar eulogy *praśasti* as opposed to *meykkīrtti*, a parallel tradition of eulogizing kings in Tamil literature, after reading Manu Francis and Charlotte Schmid's recent study of Chola period *meykkīrtti*. Francis and Schmidt reject Sheldon Pollock's argument that *meykkīrtti* "appropriated a Sanskrit aesthetic and a range of its literary models into their languages for both political and imaginative expression," arguing that the two genres remained distinct from one another in literary history. Specifically, *meykkīrtti* "never contain genealogy and focus on only one king" and "deal almost exclusively with conquests, while *praśasti* are more diverse in theme." However, the distinctions are not entirely transparent. Francis and Schmid also claim that *praśasti* "are unique pieces of poetry composed afresh, whereas *meykkīrtti* are mostly found at the beginning of stone inscriptions and are available in dozens or hundreds of copies." Challenging this distinction is the fact that identical portions of Ainnurruvar *praśasti* appear throughout the Tamil, Karnataka, and Andhra regions, adhering more to the prerequisites of the *meykkīrtti* genre in this respect. There are many other overlaps, as Tamil region Ainnurruvar frequently lifted phrases and literary devices from Chola *meykkīrtti*. Moreover, Francis and Schmid specify that "*praśasti* are always part of a royal inscriptions whereas *meykkīrtti* generally are not." The Ainnurruvar *praśasti* contradicts this claim since it always introduces a non-royal donation.

Thus there are numerous problems with the terminological choice of '*praśasti*' for defining the Ainnurruvar eulogy. I have chosen to call them as such because numerous Tamil texts specify that *meykkīrtti* are written in *ācīriyappā* meter (providing a link with Puraṇa poetry from the Tamil Sangam period), which the Ainnurruvar eulogy does not use. For more information on *meykkīrtti*, see Schmid and Francis's "Preface," in *Pondicherry Inscriptions*, vol. 2 edited by Bahour S. Kuppusamy and Vijayavenugopal, (Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry; École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2006), v-xxi.

reading the Ainnuruvar *praśasti*, in its formulation and expression of a collective mercantile identity, as actively forging connections with non-elite realms as well. As I show in this chapter, the Ainnurruvar complemented the *praśasti*'s written textual content with a material object: freestanding stones (hereafter merchant stones) which were planted in the raw earth outside of the temple's domain, and often carved with the *praśasti*'s key phrases and associated emblems. These stones were usually placed in non-elite locations, near tanks or canals located on the outskirts of villages, or in the middle of agricultural fields. Their high degree of visibility is noteworthy, suggesting that they served as visual proclamations of Ainnurruvar identity and authority to all members of the community, many of whom would not have been allowed access to the temple. We must remember that entrance and access level depended on criteria such as *jati* and birth rite, which predetermined the worshipper's physical relationship with the temple space by restricting the areas s/he was allowed to enter.⁴ As I explore below, many of the merchant stones bear sculpted emblems that non-elite and frequently illiterate populations would have recognized. These include emblems associated with farming, such as ploughs and scythes, and emblems associated with warfare, such as swords, axes, and bows. These emblems indicate that the viewing audience consisted of agricultural laborers and soldiers. Seen from this perspective, the stones suggest that the Ainnurruvar were intermediaries between elite and non-elite populations.

⁴ Various *āgamas* enumerate different sets of criteria governing temple access, some specifying the areas that worshippers were allowed to pray from, like the *ardhamandapa*, *mukhamandapa* etc. See Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Siva in Medieval India*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 70 and Annapurna Garimella, "Early Vijayanagar Architecture, Style and State Formation," Unpublished Dissertation, Columbia University, 2002, 45-6.

To add another layer of complexity to this study, it is important to note that not all merchant stones were Ainnurruvar commissions. Several stones assert in writing to have been erected by other merchant groups, and yet, the emblems adorning them are nearly identical to those displayed on stones explicitly commissioned by the Ainnurruvar. This suggests that the Ainnurruvar, rather than inventing symbolic icons anew, employed emblems that were already in use by mercantile and agrarian populations at large. Incorporating pre-existing iconography into their group identity would have enabled the Ainnurruvar to communicate effectively across widespread audiences, and also would have encouraged less prominent mercantile associations to conduct business with them.

Following Daud Ali's direction in his interpretation of the Chola monarch Rajendra I's *praśasti*, I suggest reading the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* and its visual expressions as indexing the organization's conscious intervention and manipulation of political and social codes. The texts should be interpreted as "the dialogical utterances of [merchants] actively speaking to and positioning one another, rather than as static monological documents passively expressive of some political (or social) reality."⁵ In other words, instead of reading these texts as "documentary sources," (e.g. earlier studies typically used *praśasti* to generate dynastic chronology), I analyze them as vehicles through which Ainnurruvar members actively articulated group identity. As I show, independent Ainnurruvar branches authored *praśasti* simultaneously in different places, producing variants that innovated upon common themes, while translating them to fit local contexts. In crafting *praśasti* in text and icon, the Ainnurruvar articulated beliefs and practices its members deemed crucial, and created a powerful imagined identity.

⁵ Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 166.

Using royal rhetoric as well as abstruse symbolism, the Ainnurruvar forged a group identity that transcended its functional borders.

Ainnurruvar Praśasti

The Ainnurruvar *praśasti* prefaces many of the organization's donations in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, tying the organization's members into a single cognitive network. The prose emphasizes the merchants' cosmopolitan status in no uncertain terms, and must have been instrumental in the Ainnurruvar's self-fashioning. It begins with an invocation for good fortune, followed by praise for the organization's mythic/divine origins, heroic deeds, moral qualities, learning and artistic skills, as is typical of the genre.⁶ The *praśasti* is followed by the donation's specificities, including detailed information about the donation's terms, local context, and members. They share a common linguistic format, having a shorter Sanskrit opening followed by a single vernacular language, Tamil, Kannada, and less frequently Telugu, depending on the inscription's regional location. Some diverge from the above format, adding phrases in either the vernacular language or Sanskrit.⁷ Whatever the vernacular language, the *praśasti* versions display a high degree of overlap, employing similar imagery and

⁶ Richard Salomon provides an overview of the *praśasti* format in *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 112.

⁷ I add the caveat that many scholars of Tamil literature might find issue with labeling Tamil a vernacular language. Using many examples from Tamil literature, dating as early as the Sangam period, they have argued against Sheldon Pollock's assertion that in premodern India Sanskrit writing was associated with the preeminent form of political power, and the primary language of political elites. Identifying Sanskrit as the hegemonic language denies the "dynamic multilingualism that has defined South India since the earliest times." For more information about these arguments, see Jennifer Clare's introduction in *Passages: Relationships between Tamil and Sanskrit*, Kannan, M., and Jennifer Clare, eds., (Pondicherry: French Institute of Pondicherry; Tamil Chair, Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 2009), xxiv.

identical phrases. Thus the length of the individual *praśasti* could vary widely, ranging from a few select phrases to a lengthy paean. The following section outlines the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*'s most common themes and phrases, using new translations of the texts.⁸

As an introduction to the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*, I analyze the first portion of an inscription on a freestanding stone from Samuttirapatti in Madurai District, Tamil Nadu.⁹ The inscription dates to the mid-eleventh century and is written in Tamil and Sanskrit; I quote it at length because it contains many elements recurring in other Ainnurruvar *praśasti* versions.

Let it be auspicious! In the 26th year of King Vikrama Cola Pandya Tevar, we who protect the whole earth and possess the 500 charters, whose chest is adorned by Lakshmi and are the bravest on earth and descended from the deities Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra and were the children of the goddess Sri Durga of Aiyapolil (Aihole), who became friends of the 'old goddess.'¹⁰

Happily transacting in the 18 pattinam, 32 velapuram, 64 covered markets, the chettis, the merchant chettis, the Valanjiyar (kavarai), Chamunda Svamigals, the group of 300 warriors of sorts carrying victorious parasols,

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, I have translated the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* versions with the generous assistance of Y. Subbarayalu. Original language transcriptions can be found in Y. Subbarayalu and P. Shanmugam's "Appendix 2: Texts of Select inscriptions of the Trade Guilds," *AMCA*, 227-283. I have used their number systems to identify inscriptions, e.g. *AMCA* 1 corresponds to inscription [1] in Subbarayalu and Shanmugam's appendix.

⁹ The stone is currently located in the TN Mahal Museum in Madurai. I was unable to photograph it.

¹⁰ *Svasti śrī! Samasta bhuvanāśraya pañcaśata vīrśāsana laksane lakshmi vakshastala puvaṇa parkārama śrī vāsudēva kaṇṭaḷi mūlapattirōrpava śrī ayyapolīlpura paramēcurvarikku makkaḷāki śrī paḷapattāarakikkut tuṇaivarāki.* The inscription's initial phrases are entirely Sanskrit with the exception of the Tamil dative case ending (–*ukku*) after 'Paramesvari' and the Tamil word for 'sons' (*makkaḷ*). *AMCA* 8, 232-3.

the 700 swordbearers, warriors, the shop keepers on the big street, the merchants with *pasumpai* (literally the sack containing merchandise), and writers, all of whom made Kali grow emaciated and weak and eradicated all enemies on earth in every direction, for whom charity grows, whose fame is known everywhere, whose righteous scepter was present everywhere, and who happily carry on the *samaya dharma* (merchant code of conduct).

The Ainnuruvar of 1000 directions, the four corners of the earth, and of the 18 countries, the Ainnurruvar from Paniya nadu, and our sons, the merchant warriors, and our sons the servants of patinenbhumi, and [the warriors] met together in Paniyanadu, Rajendra Chola Valanadu, in Rajarajapandi Nadu . . . the big assembly named for the beautiful Pandya, under the Ainurruvan Tamarind tree. The Tisai Ayirattainurruvars' good deed is arranged as follows:

The preceding sentences describe an event in which warriors in the service of the Ainnurruvar killed several of their enemies. The conflict is described in detail, concluding with a decision to honor the warriors by transforming their town into an *erivīra-paṭṭinam* (literally, “warrior port”), a designation that would have given the city’s warrior inhabitants special rights and a monetary reward.¹¹ The Samutirapatti *prāśasti* consists of distinct sections (delineated here by paragraph) that unfold in fluid progression. The prose moves from the group’s universal to local associations, telescoping into a precise temporal moment and geographic location, where the details of

¹¹ There have been many interpretations of *erivīra-paṭṭinam*, such as ‘mercantile town’ (T. N Subramaniam); ‘fortified mart’ (Venkatrama Ayyar); and ‘market-towns protected by warriors (K. Indrapala). Subbarayalu and Karashima recently formulated a new definition for *erivīra-paṭṭinam* in *AMCA*, specifying that it “is the name of the town conferred on it by the merchants of Ayyavole (Ainnurruvar) in appreciation of the brave deed done for them by the virakodiyar, who are stated in many inscriptions to be our (Ainnurruvar merchants’) sons.” Karashima, “South Indian and Sri Lankan Inscriptions,” *AMCA*, 8.

the decision and the events it commemorates are elaborated. The first portion, written in Sanskrit, is the most commonly repeated refrain within the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* corpus. It describes the association's divine origins and unparalleled heroism: we infer that because they protect the whole earth, their heroism is equivalent to that of the gods. By listing their divine ancestors (Vasudeva, Kandali, and Mulabadra), and naming the great goddess Durga as their mother, the Ainnurruvar formulate a genealogy akin to *meykkīrttis* commissioned by contemporaneous Chola kings, which claimed the dynasty's descent from the sun.¹² The statement that Lakshmi "adorned their chests" alludes to a sexual relationship with the goddess, a claim made by nearly all royal houses that commissioned eulogies.¹³ In using the metaphor, the Ainnurruvar insert themselves into preexisting modes of Puranic discourse, a "transcendent otherworldly set of myths employed by kings to legitimate their authority."¹⁴ Puranic world order depended on a paramount overlord i.e. king, who was assisted by Vishnu, embodying the god on earth. Vishnu favored only a single king at a time, hence to claim ownership of Vishnu's bride, Lakshmi, was tantamount to proclaiming overlordship of the entire universe.

From this perspective, the Ainnurruvar's assertion that they possess the goddess seems to challenge the existing hierarchy. In the mid-eleventh century, the time of the Ainnurruvar's inscription, the Chola monarchy was at the height of its power, making the Ainnurruvar's challenge to its hegemony all the more intrepid. In fact, the borrowed metaphor was probably not intended as provocation; rather, in reproducing royal rhetoric

¹² For example, see H. Krishna Sastri, ed. and tr. "The Tiruvalangadu Copper Plates of the Sixth Year of Rajendra-Chola I," *SII* 3, 383-439.

¹³ Francis and Schmid state that the practice of mentioning goddesses as spouses derives from Sanskrit *praśasti*, even though it is common to most *meykkīrttis*. "Preface," *Pondicherry Inscriptions*, xvi.

¹⁴ Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 177.

and idiom, the Ainnurruvar were participating in a literary culture where such ostentatious borrowings were the norm. Burton Stein writes, “the great kingly style [in *praśasti* and *meykkīrtti*] was emulated by the *hundreds* of locality chiefs of *Tamiḷakam*, thus providing the latter with the rule competence of “little kings.”¹⁵ Thus, mimicry signalled the Ainnurruvar’s respect of rather than a challenge to kings. This might explain the Ainnurruvar’s claim of being “the possessors of the 500 charters,” an accomplishment that is constantly reiterated in their *praśastis* and nomenclature. Chola kings frequently inscribed their charters or orders (*śāsanam*) on copper plates, giving the medium royal associations. The plates themselves were used in ceremonies as material testimonies of the king’s ability to conduct successful conquests. For example, Rajendra I’s copper plates from Tiruvalangadu state that after conquering Kerala, “his orders (*śāsanam*) were made to shine, being placed on the rows of diadems of these rulers.”¹⁶

A set of Ainnurruvar commissioned copper plates discovered at Bedikhal, Belgaum District, Karnataka and dated 1000 CE shares nearly identical phrases with the Samuttirapatti inscription. It was not common practice for non-royal groups to inscribe on copper, and it thus seems likely that the Ainnurruvar self-consciously drew on the authority of preexisting visual formats associated with royalty in this instance. This would have doubtlessly elevated the Bedikhal Ainnurruvar branch’s public status. While the Bedikhal grant’s medium (copper plates) indexes royal tradition, its content diverges wildly from typical royal charters in providing detailed information about martial conquest. The grant records the Ainnurruvar paying homage to a fierce warrior, Revana,

¹⁵ Italics are mine. This statement summarizes a crucial argument for Stein’s vision of a medieval south Indian “segmentary state” (summarized in Chapter 1). Stein, “Circulation,” 17.

¹⁶ Ali, “Royal Eulogy as World History,” 203.

who killed thirteen people, including two babies and an individual named Sammanaka who had murdered an Ainnurruvar member. After killing Sammanaka, the grant details, Revana drinks his blood at the behest of the ‘Five Hundred svamis.’ Such gore never would have dripped so freely in royal texts, suggesting that the Bedikhal plates combine aspects of both elite and non-elite realms (Ali suggests that the latter realm might have been a hillside tribes) in a fascinating way.¹⁷

The Bedikhal plates still adhere to the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*’s format, however. In addition to listing the Ainnurruvar’s formulaic genealogy and mercantile constituents (they are the descendants of Vasudeva, Kandali, and Mulabhadra; transact in all countries including the 18 pattinam, 32 velapuram, 64 covered markets, etc.),¹⁸ the Bedikhal plates describe a merchant prostrating “with all eight limbs” (*sāshṭāmgameragi*)¹⁹ and “saluting with joined hands raised to the head” (*poḍavattū*). This indicates that the plates were used in ceremonial contexts like the Tiruvalangadu plates mentioned above.²⁰ It is almost certain that other branches of merchants possessed copper plates, although the

¹⁷ Ali observes that such gruesome detail never found expression in court produced Sanskrit charters and suggests inspiration from “sub-imperial and non-aristocratic warrior groups or possibly even bandits who inhabited the rugged and hilly regions of upland Tamil nadu and southwestern Karnataka,” “Between Market and Court,” 197.

Two notable variations in the Bedikhal prasasti are the substitution of Bhagavati for Durga, while the *samaya dharma* becomes the “*virabalanjya* dharma.” The insertion of localized terms of the goddess and the merchant code of conduct must have served as “translations” of the text, demonstrating that the *praśasti* was moulded to fit different contexts. “Ainnurruvar,” *AMCA*, 73; 229-30.

¹⁸ Karashima and Subbarayalu, “Ainnurruvar,” *AMCA*, 73-74; 229-230.

¹⁹ The “eight limbs” are the hands, breast, forehead, knees, and feet, according to Reverend Ferdinand Kittel under “*sāshṭānga*”, in *A Kannada-English Dictionary*, (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2010). Thanks to Katherine Kasdorf for this reference.

²⁰ I have used Daud Ali’s Kannada translations from “Between Market and Court,” 194, slightly modified by Katherine Kasdorf in personal communication.

comparatively simple plates from Bedikhal is the only set known to us.²¹ As Ali notes, the *praśasti* itself “allowed the ainnurruvar to participate in the ‘public’ world of the elite in early medieval south India, dominated as it was by aristocratic culture. On the one hand, the *praśasti* itself functioned as an instrument of self-presentation in public life which created an immediate ‘commensurability’ in the political realm . . . But on the other hand, as a set of substantive claims, the *praśasti* suggests that merchant corporations sought to develop the skills to interact in political settings in which they must have often found themselves.”²² In other words, by emulating kingly format and claiming knowledge of courtly protocol, *praśasti* allowed the Ainnurruvar to cultivate both fictional and factual identities in the public sphere.²³

The *praśasti*’s next section frames this dichotomy, describing the Ainnurruvar’s circulatory network in both actual and mythic terms. It combines terminology describing known sites of mercantile activity with a constellation of royal, cosmological, and more obscure sources. For instance, they transact within *pattinam*, *velapuram* (ports), and covered markets, all of which comprise identifiable commercial zones mentioned in other inscriptions. Augmenting the meaning of these sites, however, are sacred numbers quantifying these zones; examples of sacred numerology recur in a variety of religious texts. To name a few: 18 books comprise the *Mahabharata*; the *Kamasutra* describes 64

²¹ An Ainnurruvar inscription at Koyilpatti, Tiruchirappalli District (see Chapter Three for description of temple architecture) declares that it was copied in stone and copper. See Appendix 1 (38) for translation.

²² Daud Ali, “Between Market and Court: The Careers of Two Courtier Merchants in the Twelfth-Century Deccan,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010), 193.

²³ Ali notes that the Ainnurruvar *prasasti* enunciates mercantile ambitions by “draw[ing] directly from a well established vocabulary of courtly political discourse,” including familiarity with elite prerogatives such as the science of political policy, truthfulness, Sanskrit, and manners. Ali, “Between Market and Court,” 193-194.

types of art (*kala*); and the *Vishvakarma Vastushastra* lists 32 types of wood that can be used in the construction of secular architecture.²⁴ In qualifying sites of mercantile activity, sacred numbers imply the sacred status of the merchants' circulatory spaces. Further emphasizing the sacred nature of their profession, they uphold and protect the *samaya dharma*, the mercantile code of conduct, with their scepter, which combats the degenerative force of the Kali *yuga*. These tropes reappear in royal *praśasti*, further underscoring the close discursive relationship between royal and mercantile literary expressions. For example, Vikrama Chola (r. 1118-1135) uses similar phraseology in his own *meykkīrtti*, a portion of which reads, "while his scepter went and made all the regions prosper, the cruel Kali was driven away, and true righteousness flourished."²⁵ In this passage, Vikrama Chola uses two metaphors that also appear in the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* (driving away Kali and possessing a righteous scepter) to underscore his throne's legitimacy.

Notable also is the Ainnurruvar's proclaimed overlordship of other merchant groups. The named constituents are generic groups, the actual participants in the decision appearing later as signatories of the inscription. Comparison with the roughly contemporary Bedikhal copper plates from Karnataka mentioned above shows the presence of nearly identical subsidiary groups (albeit in Kannada language inflected terminology), including the merchant chettis, chamunda svamigals (i.e. *gāvunḍa sāmī*), shopkeepers, and possessors of the *pasumpai* (sack), etc.²⁶ These figures were probably

²⁴ Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004), 569.

²⁵ *Pondicherry Inscriptions* 31, 17.

²⁶ See *AMCA* 5, 229-230 for Kannada transcription.

symbolic rather than actual; their appearance in the *praśasti* functions to underscore the Ainnurruvar's authority over its subsidiaries, further emphasizing that its members came from all corners of the earth and a thousand directions. Intriguing also is the fact that many subsidiary groups carry symbolic items that become paradigmatic of the organization. Some of these objects have obvious royal antecedents, specifically, parasols and scepters, which royal *meykkīrtti* mention as the king's attributes. Vikrama Chola I's *praśasti*, for example, describes that "his scepter, along with wheel (of his authority), swayed over all regions, (his) white parasol cast its shade on high, like a matchless second moon, overspreading the whole world."²⁷ In royal courts, these emblems had an added visual dimension, appearing on royal regalia like the Tiruvalangadu copper plate seal mentioned earlier (Figs. 2.1-2). The signet ring binds the Chola king's orders together and bears the Chola dynasty's primary emblems: a parasol at the top is framed by two flywhisks (signs that also connote holy personages), while immediately underneath, two fish and a tiger (the respective emblems of the Pandya and Chola monarchies) are surrounded by a symmetrical arrangement of lamps, flags, and scepters. As I show below, the Ainnurruvar integrated this format into their freestanding stones.

The Bedikhal inscription in particular, and the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* in general includes non-royal emblems as well: notably, swords and *pasumpai*. While the former emblem has obvious martial associations, the latter is associated specifically with commercial activity. Functionally, the *pasumpai* was a sack containing merchandise, but in other Ainnurruvar inscriptions it is deified, "emitting bright light," and "worshipped as a god." The incorporation of these emblems into the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* plainly

²⁷ *Pondicherry Inscriptions* 32, 18.

demonstrates that merchants asserted their authority through the use of signs or emblems. These emblems were displayed on the merchant stones analyzed below, and ostensibly used in ceremonial contexts as paraphernalia. Although no written accounts of these ceremonies exist, numerous inscriptions record meetings where agreements were punctuated by rituals. At Tiruttandanapuram in the late thirteenth century, for example, the Ainnurruvar “gathered in front of the goddess and poured water (i.e. gifted) the tax received on all merchandise [sold] around the temple.”²⁸

In the next section of the Samutirapatti inscription, the narrative voice switches from omniscient to the first person plural (i.e. the merchants’ perspective), transitioning into description of actual events pertaining to the donation. The narrator relates the precise location where the decision occurred, naming the locale, district, and finally, the exact coordinates (“We the Ainnurruvar . . . met together in Paniyanadu, Rajendra Chola Valanadu, in Rajarajapandi Nadu . . . the big assembly named for the beautiful Pandya, under the Ainurruvan Tamarind tree”), eliding temporality and event into a fixed spatial point. The Samutirapatti inscription continues by describing the heroic deeds of warriors who were in the Ainnurruvar’s service and their subsequent honoring, but many other inscriptions provide long lists of commercial goods and taxable prices at this point.²⁹ For instance, an inscription from Sarkar Periyapalayam, Erode District, dated 1289 CE, records the agreed upon taxes for international and domestic imports and exports, specifying the monetary amount (*panam*) of taxes to be paid on each item:

²⁸ *AMCA* 32. See my translation in Appendix 1.

²⁹ Scholars of Tamil inscriptions have objected to labeling this section the inscription’s “business portion,” for there is certainly much evidence that literary inventiveness could and did permeate the particulars of the recorded decision and/or event as well. See Richard Salomon’s *Indian Epigraphy* for a more traditional discussion of the structure of inscriptions, and Leslie Orr’s “Preface” in *Pondicherry Inscriptions* (vol. 1) and *Passages Between Tamil and Sanskrit* (op. cit) for its critique.

2 *panam* for each bundle of cloth; 1/20 *panam* for each spool of thread/yarn; ½ *panam* for each areca nut; for each bag 1/20 *panam*; donkey bundles . . .; ½ *panam* for black commodities (iron?); 1/16 *panam* for grains; 1 *panam* for elephant; ½ *panam* for horse; sandalwood bundle ¼ *panam*, coarse cloth (?) ¼ *panam*, young cattle 1/10 *panam*, other commodities proportionately.³⁰

In addition to recording the ‘business portion’ of the decision or event, this section also identifies important places and individuals. Every phrase contains at least one individual who was involved in the event, and is followed by a long list of signatories voting in favor of the decision, each possessing multiple titles. These titles might be elaborate, as seen in an inscription from Kamudi, Ramanathapuram District, from around the tenth century, which includes among its signatories “the hero of Muda Nadu, Marvattu Malai Munivar Cingam (lion), Ranakitti of Puna Natu in Gangamandalam, Lancinkamum who was never afraid, the young lion Kavarai who carried the banner . . .”³¹ While every inscription elaborates on its signatories to varying degrees, the frequently lengthy list of names serves as a reminder that one of the main functions of inscriptions was as contract.

Merchant Stones

So far I have focused on the content of stone inscriptions, which is but one level of their interpretation. Seeing an inscription *in situ* elucidates its multidimensional nature.

³⁰ *AMCA* 35. See my translation in Appendix 1.

³¹ *AMCA* 4. See my translation in Appendix 1.

Its tactile and visual properties are immediately apparent; script quality varies dramatically, ranging from sloppy to exquisite. Writing might cover a temple wall, competing with sculpture for visual prominence, or in subtler form, comprising a single line along the temple base. For example, when entering the Shiva temple in Pettavaitalai, Tiruchirappalli District, neatly inscribed text on the eastern *mahamandapa* entrance's wall confronts the visitor, serving as the visual equivalent of a large signboard (Fig. 2.3). In this respect, we are reminded that the inscriptions available to us were public expressions of politics and power. Writing in stone constituted the final stage of a transaction, in which a copy of the decision was made for the public record. As Leslie Orr has noted, "to have something 'written in stone' carried the same sense in medieval Tamilnadu as does in contemporary English usage, connoting a solemn and permanent agreement."³² Stone inscriptions were important enough to be transported significant distances: a freestanding stone, now located at the Gangaikondacholapuram site museum, records tax benefits and residential quarters that Rajarajachola granted to Ainnurruvar living in Tanjavur.³³ Members apparently brought the stone with them as proof of their privileges when relocating to the new Chola capital during the reign of Rajendra I. Other copies of the decision, which are no longer available to us, would have been transcribed on perishable materials like palm leaf manuscripts and kept by involved parties.

The inscription's material dimension was an equally important marker of meaning, and would have been understood in the eyes of its contemporary viewers as an assertion of the economic status of its patron and the importance of its contents. After all, it was

³² Leslie Orr, "Preface," *Pondicherry Inscriptions*, vol. 1, iv.

³³ Personal conversation with R. Nagaswamy in 2007.

none other than Ashoka, the most famous emperor from early Indian history, who had inaugurated the practice of engraving edicts in public contexts by the third century BCE.³⁴ To command the resources to have something inscribed as proof of one's servitude to the temple and/or community, doubtlessly would have elevated the patron's status. Inscriptions also appeared outside temple walls. As mentioned above, royal *praśasti* frequently were inscribed on copper plates, an enterprise that required expensive material and hours of highly skilled labor; thus its material qualities alone served as a grandiose expression of its patrons importance. For example, the Tiruvalangadu copper plates consist of 31 sheets of metal weighing over 200 pounds, making it an object of considerable economic value as well as an important document.³⁵

Yet another alternative for displaying inscriptions were freestanding stones (merchant stones), located outside of the temple grounds, which probably offered a less costly means of visual and political expression to individual donors. The following map charts the known locations of merchant stones (Map 19). Most stones average between four and six feet in height, and would have been prominent markers relative to the flat, agricultural landscape. There are three types of merchant stones: 1) rectangular with at least one flat surface bearing an inscription, located immediately outside of a temple; 2) rectangular with at least one flat surface bearing an inscription and figurative emblems; 3) of irregular shape, carrying an image of a deity, emblems, and inscription. Here I focus on the latter two categories.

³⁴ Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 59.

³⁵ Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 170.

The extant merchant stones, although not as numerous as temple inscriptions, provide insight onto how merchant associations functioned within non-elite locales.³⁶ Although their formats differ from one another, merchant stones operated as indexical signs of territory, resources, and power. Erecting stones at significant locations to mark significant events was a commonplace representational practice among non-elite groups in medieval south India, and these forms would have been easily recognizable to the audiences at which they were directed. While they did not cover the entire globe, as the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* claimed, merchant stones would have automatically signaled connections with similar icons readily visible within public spaces. As such, these signs also beg comparison with other forms of material culture prevalent at the time of their creation. Comparing select merchant stones with these commissions, I show their historical contingency as part and parcel of medieval south Indian visual culture. The Ainnurruvar's stones participated in this milieu while simultaneously transforming the appearance and content of preexisting forms.

Hero Stones (*Virakal*)

Hero stones (*virakal*) present the most obvious typological parallels to merchant stones, apparent in their striking formal similarities as well as in their similar geographical locations. Like merchant stones, they are carved on a single, usually rectangular, stone slab, with at least one flat surface to accommodate sculpture, and less frequently, writing that names and describes the hero's heroic deed. Funereal objects like

³⁶ Fewer stones have survived as a result of their less sturdy medium—this is not only the case with merchant stones, but hero stones and boundary stones as well, which I detail below. This serves as a reminder that the extant material culture represents only a fraction of what existed in the premodern period.

relic caskets and mirrors sometimes accompanied the warrior's image. Erected at the site of the hero's death, *virakal* had strong mortuary ties, often receiving ritual worship, while their small scale would have made them a more economic means of expression, enabling less wealthy clientele to engage in the wider world of patronage.³⁷

As formal types, hero stones predate merchant stones, as seen through extensive descriptions of their proper formats and ceremonial functions in Sangam period literature. These references tell us that as early as the second century BCE, hero stones were erected to commemorate fallen warriors who had died while protecting a locale.³⁸ An additional similarity between hero and merchant stones is the fact that they occupy similar geographical locations; almost invariably they are located inland, where pastoral tracts are plentiful. As Cynthia Talbot relates, pastoralists—farmers, cow herders, cattle breeders—were the primary patrons of *virakal* in Andhra Pradesh, which explains their primarily agricultural locations. Hero stones from other regions also tend to be located inland, suggesting *virakal*'s general connection with agricultural communities.³⁹ Many scholars have hypothesized that “the martial character of inland South Indian society was perhaps forged through the need to protect livestock,”⁴⁰ which perhaps explains the higher concentration of merchant stones commemorating martial activities in inland

³⁷ They range from around two to five feet in height.

³⁸ They are referred to as *natukal* in Sangam period texts, and more commonly as *virakal* within a pan-Indic phenomenon. Defending villages against cattle raids is a frequent subject of Tamil *puram* poetry. See especially the *Puranānūru*. For other mentions of hero stones in early Tamil literature, see R. Nagaswamy, *Facets of South Indian Art and Architecture*, (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2003).

³⁹ For an overview see S. Settar's “Memorial Stones in South India,” in S. Settar, and Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer, eds. *Memorial Stones: A Study of Their Origin, Significance, and Variety*, South Asian Studies. Dharwad; New Delhi: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnataka University; South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany, 1982.

⁴⁰ Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

agrarian areas. As I show below, merchant stones also evince strong connections with agrarian populations, further imbricating the two formal types.

As objects, *virakal* convey multivalent meanings, commemorating event and individual, and frequently becoming holy sites that individuals and communities revere through ritual practice. One *virakal* stands at Nagainallur, Karur District (Figs. 2.4-5). The stone measures around 3.5 feet tall, and each side is carved with a different representation of a warrior in battle: in one image, he leans backwards, wielding a large bow, and in the other, he launches towards an enemy with shield in hand and sword raised to strike. No writing identifies the warrior, but the two poignant images were most likely intended as a portrait of a single individual. Together, they commemorate the warrior who probably died during battle. Sangam literature describes the multi-stage process required for ensuring the stone's sanctity, including processes related to the stone's selection, preparation, and daily rituals.⁴¹ Indeed, it seems that some of these traditions have carried on into the present, as the *virakal* still receives daily ritual worship, wherein it is wrapped in cloth and ornamented with sandal paste, kumkum, and offerings of flowers. Both material and written evidence attest that from early history onwards, heroic individuals who died on the village's behalf were deified, becoming its official guardians.⁴² R. Nagaswamy observes that in many cases, a hero's sacrifice achieved notoriety outside his immediate locality, resulting in regional deification of certain heroic individuals.⁴³ Today's devotees believe that worshipping *virakal* not only protects the

⁴¹ This six-stage procedure is described in the grammatical treatise, the *Tolkāppiyam*. Nagaswamy, *Facets*, 11.

⁴² Natana Kacinatan, *Hero Stones in Tamil Nadu*, (Madras: Arun Publications, 1978), 3.

⁴³ Nagaswamy identifies several heroes who are venerated in middle, southern, northern, Kongu regions of Tamil Nadu respectively. *Facets*, 6.

village, but also ensures plentiful rain for crops.⁴⁴ Therefore, *virakal* stand at the intersection of religious and representational practices, embodying both deceased individual and “village god.”

Passages Between Merchant and Hero Stones

The *virakal*'s strong mortuary association might have made it an attractive formal type for merchant patronage, since many merchant inscriptions commemorate warriors who died while protecting the merchant association, like the Samutirapatti inscription studied above. Several Ainnurruvar inscriptions, in addition to recording the feats of their fallen warriors, specify that all its members were present when “making” and “planting” the merchant stone, suggesting that the stone received ritual consecration just as a *virakal* would have.⁴⁵ Another stone from Elkamvalasu, Sri Lanka, dating to ca. 1400, honors the Ainnurruvar's fallen soldiers, and is carved with multiple emblems (Fig. 2.6), representing the second category of merchant stone formats. The emblems have multiple connotations. Some are auspicious (conches, lamp, flywhisks, parasol, and trident), others are martial (swords, bow and arrow, and axe), and the rest are agricultural (horsewhip, scythe, and sickle). Noteworthy is the presence of the goddess Durga, who stands immediately underneath the parasol at the top, holding spears, while her lion mount appears to her bottom right. Like *virakal*, the Elkamvalasu merchant stone, by commemorating the Ainnurruvar's fallen warriors, embodies both event and individual in freestanding sculpted rock.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁵ See Appendix 1, no. 28 for translation.

The parallels between *virakal* and merchant stone become even more apparent when considering their frequent close proximity to one another. Located scarcely a mile away from the Nagainallur *virakal* is a fine example of a non-Ainnurruvar patronized merchant stone possessing similar iconography (Figs. 2.7-8). At six feet high and 2.5 feet in width, it is larger than the *virakal*, but presents obvious parallels in location, format and medium. Like many hero stones, it is located on the outskirts of the village, in this case, beside a large man made tank.⁴⁶ Writing on the stone, assignable on paleographical grounds to between the tenth and eleventh centuries, names two different groups ‘the 300’ and the ‘aimpengulu.’⁴⁷ While the latter group remains unidentified, ‘the 300’ appears in other mercantile inscriptions as the Ainnurruvar’s subsidiaries. For example, at Vahalkada, Sri Lanka, an Ainnurruvar *praśasti* mentions “the 300 warriors with swords” and “the 300 of the victorious parasol.”⁴⁸ The mercantile emblems occupy nearly two-thirds of the Nagainallur merchant stone, appearing immediately underneath the writing. Just like the Elkamvalasu merchant stone, the Nagainallur stone also includes martial and agriculture implements: swords, horsewhip, lance, billhook, sickle, scythe, and a large pole that frames the emblems at the bottom. Unique, however, is the presence of an elegantly articulated saddled horse, one of the most valuable commercial items at the time. Daud Ali, writing on mercantile involvement in medieval south Indian courts, notes that many inscriptions describe trade networks facilitating the transfer of horses from the Malabar Coast through the Tamil region and onto the Deccan. War-

⁴⁶ Nagaswamy, *Facets*, 10.

⁴⁷ The stone is badly eroded, making most of the writing illegible. See C. Sridaran, "Nāgai Nallūr Vanigak Kalvettu," *Kalvettu* 56 (2002): 1-3.

⁴⁸ AMCA 28, 265-66.

horses were not native to peninsular India, but had become integral to successful war campaigns of political elites, such as the Hoysalas of southern Karnataka. Horses were shipped to South India through a network of ports originating in the Persian Gulf, and transported further inland by Malabar Coast *nanadesi* (Ainnurruvar) merchants. By the fourteenth century, Ali writes, horses had become the most prized possessions of political elites across south India.⁴⁹ Their presence on merchant stones thus indexes the merchants' merchandise as well as the status and prestige associated with owning horses.

Despite the fact that the Nagainallur stone's patrons were not Ainnurruvar members, its sculptural emblems are quite similar to those adorning Ainnurruvar merchant stones. In addition to the Elkamvalasu stone mentioned earlier, comparison with a merchant stone from Kaliyampatti in Tiruchirappalli District demonstrates a common repertoire of emblems (Fig. 2.9): at the top, a parasol shades the *pasumpai*, which is surrounded by two lamps and fly whisks, while the bottom register contains a sword and shield, bow and arrow, trident, sickle, horsewhip, and billhook. A large pole undergirds the entire assortment of implements, replicating the Nagainallur stone's format. Unlike the Nagainallur stone, however, the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* appears directly underneath the emblems.⁵⁰ This is not an isolated instance of a common repertoire of symbols appearing on both Ainnurruvar and non-Ainnurruvar sponsored merchant stones. It seems that the majority of sculpted merchant stones, regardless of patron, displayed the same emblems. I suspect that this parallel indicates the existence of a widespread

⁴⁹ Ali, "Between Market and Court," 201-2.

⁵⁰ Naga Ganesan, "Kaliyampatti, Ayyappolil Aiññūrruvar Kalvetu," *Āvanam* 11, 24.

“mercantile culture,” the symbols of which the Ainnurruvar incorporated, rather than inventing wholesale, into self-representational forms like merchant stones and *praśasti*.

Such incorporation becomes more apparent when considering instances when two separate organizations participated in a joint dedication and combined their respective *praśastis*. The Ainnurruvar and the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu*—a regional organization representing the interests of agrarian populations—for instance, collaborated frequently between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁵¹ What is notable about the combined *praśasti* is that the emblems remain consistent with those from previous Ainnurruvar *praśasti*, with the exception of a “beautiful plough,” (*Citramēḷi*), which the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* used as title and emblem in independent donations. The following *praśasti* excerpt provides lists of these emblems while elaborating on the organizations’ environmental context in poetic prose. The Ainnurruvar and the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu*,

Shine in every direction, who speak sweet words, but whose harsh words remove evil, who have flourished in every *mandalam* across the 4 oceans forever (as long as the moon), who are fanned by the wind god and lustrated by the rain god, whose people are happy everywhere, whose gardens have coconut, jackfruit, mango, plantain, areca nut, jasmine, parrots, beautifully existing together, who make charity prosper and evil disappear, whose fame grows as their enemies are vanquished, who carry

⁵¹ Kenneth Hall writes that the “Periyanāḍu regions and assemblies were in fact a creation of the cultivators themselves in order to defend their interests against the centralizing activities of the Cōla.” In *Trade and Statecraft*, 203.

Champakalakshmi has noted the close partnerships between the Citramēḷi and the Ainnurruvar, and hypothesizes that the origins of the Citrameli are thanks “to the conscious efforts of the Tondaināḍu agriculturists, later spreading to other parts of the Tamil country, and even into South Karnataka and Andhra,” *Trade, Ideology, and Urbanization*, 388.

the righteous scepter, beautiful plough, their godlike *pasumpai* that gives bright light, who are happily transacting with kindness and compassion.⁵²

While no known merchant stones record joint Ainnurruvar and *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* donations, the above *praśasti* demonstrates that emblems and attributes could be transferred from one mercantile group to another with ease. The *pasumpai* and scepter, which previously were specific emblems of the Ainnurruvar, were now also the emblems of the *Citramēḷi*. I should also point out that the Ainnurruvar's partnering with the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* reiterates the Ainnurruvar's close connection with non-elite groups. Although they had started out as agricultural laborers, by the thirteenth century the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* organization had gained significant power, some of its members achieving the "lordly" status described in Chapter One. Like the Ainnurruvar before them, the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* display agricultural tools in their *praśasti* (the organization's name itself, *Citramēḷi*, translates as the "beautiful plough") and freestanding stones to emphasize their non-elite origins and display close connections with tillers of the earth.

The emblems displayed on merchant stones should be interpreted as multivalent, representing not only individual objects, but also attributes of the organization itself. In premodern India, the use of multivalent emblems, conveying multiple meanings to viewers was commonplace in artistic production. Vidya Dehejia has attended to these issues in her study of early Buddhist art, showing that sculpted icons like footprints, parasol, and throne might represent the Buddha himself, sacred sites, events related to his

⁵² See Appendix 1, *AMCA* 36.

life, and truths of the Buddhist faith.⁵³ While the merchant stones studied here lack the narrative elements of the images that Dehejia studies, it is clear that their deployment of emblems draws upon an aesthetic and ethos at least partially related to such visual precedents. For instance, Dehejia observes that in early Buddhist art, a *stūpa* might have referenced an important attribute of the Buddha, his “achievement in finally severing the bonds of rebirth.”⁵⁴ By this logic, I deduce that displaying a range of merchant-associated emblems on stone conveyed the merchants’ high status to wider audiences. Like merchants, royal courts also used multivalent emblems to announce their presence and authority. The Tiruvalangadu copper signet ring mentioned earlier serves this purpose by enunciating the Cholas’ authority over competing royal lines through the strategic display of culturally encoded symbols (Fig. 2.2). In the ring’s center is a tiger, the Cholas’ emblem, which watches over the emblems of three defeated monarchical lines: the Pandya (two vertical fish), Chera (a bow), and eastern Chalukyas (a boar). The parasol and flywhisks framing the emblems (also found in many merchant stones) are frequently used in representations of the divine, imparting a certain degree of sacredness to the underlying message that the Cholas were a martial force to be reckoned with. While the common viewer would not have been afforded regular access to the Chola’s copper plates, we know that they were frequently displayed in public ceremonies, where they would have been carried in procession. Daud Ali, reading the Tiruvalangadu copper plates, notes that the text informs us of the exact ceremonial proceedings by which elite members of local populations came into contact with the plates: “seeing the royal order,

⁵³ Vidya Dehejia, "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems." *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1991), 45.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

we, the chief men of the district, went out, revered it and placed [it] on our heads.”⁵⁵

While this description does not imply that non-royal individuals would have had prolonged contact with the plates, it does suggest they would have had limited access to them, allowing their visual format to impact the Ainnurruvar’s visual representations.

So far I have discussed a formal type of merchant stones that are rectangular and bear emblems and inscriptions representing merchant organizations. The next formal type of merchant stones that I will discuss contains a high relief image of a deity, a feature that further implies the stone’s religious functions. I have suggested earlier that merchant stones, both in format and in their frequent dedication to fallen soldiers present a visual connection to *virakal* (hero stones). Because the latter was known to have received ritual worship, I intimated that merchant stones might also have had religious or ritual dimensions. Although few examples survive, merchant stones with sculptural representations of gods surely indicate the conflation of emblem, event, and religious practice. An excellent example of this type stands on the roadside in Melnangavaram, Karur District, Tamil Nadu, measuring three feet high and fifteen inches across (Fig. 2.10). One side of the stone resembles the merchant stones studied above, and is inscribed with a donation that attributes its construction to the Valanjiyar Ainnurruvar, paleographically assignable to ca. 1000,⁵⁶ which is in turn surrounded by prominent emblems.⁵⁷ At the top, two lamps surround a badly eroded object (possibly a parasol sheltering a *pasumpai*), all of which rest upon three poles (Fig. 2.11). Underneath and to

⁵⁵ Ali, “Royal Eulogy as World History,” 203.

⁵⁶ The Valañjiyar was a warrior *cum* merchant group known to have frequently partnered with the Ainnurruvar. See Chapter 3 for a study of Ainnurruvar-Valañjiyar sponsored temples.

⁵⁷ C. Sridaran, “Mēl nangavaram Aiññūruvar Kalvēṭṭu,” *Āvanam* 10, 16-17.

the left, a *pasumpai* and pole lean against one another. The stone's two adjacent short sides are carved with low relief images of agricultural, commercial, and martial emblems, including a horsewhip, sickle, billhook, sword, and shield (Figs. 2.12-13).

Differing from the merchant stones discussed thus far, however, is the image on the stone's opposite side, which immediately registers as Korravai, the Victorious Durga, who stands erect with the demon buffalo Mahisha's severed head, now badly eroded, at her feet (Fig. 2.14). This image alludes to the Mahishasuramardini, the battle between Durga and Mahisha,⁵⁸ and depicts the goddess after she has vanquished her foe. The imagery representing Mahishasuramardini is pan-Indian, appearing in a variety of forms across South Asia, but the Victorious Durga is frequently encountered in the Tamil region.⁵⁹ She wears a *kuca bandha* (breast binding), *dhoti* (loincloth), and conical *mukuṭa* (crown). Her lower hands are in *abhaya* and *katyavalambita mudra*, while the upper left holds a conch and the upper right holds a discus. The Melnangavaram image displays all of the characteristics typifying Tamil representations of the goddess, especially the *kuca bandha*, which does not appear in representations outside the region. Similar versions of Victorious Durga were usually present in contemporaneous temple's iconographic programs, where they occupy the northern *devakōṣṭha* (niche), as seen in an example of a standing Durga from the Tirumandisvaram temple at Gramam, Villupuram

⁵⁸ Vidya Dehejia and Gary Tartakov have made an extensive study of the Mahiṣāsūramardinī themes as represented in sculpture, appearing in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The theme "depicts the battle between Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, who is the incarnation of the *śakti* (force) of all the great Gods, and Mahisasura, the demon who had defeated the Gods and driven them from their heavens." "Sharing Intrusion and Influence: The Mahiṣāsūramardinī Imagery of the Calukyas and the Pallavas." *Artibus Asiae* 45, No. 4 (1984), 290.

⁵⁹ Dehejia and Tartakov observe that although the Victorious Durga appears across south India, she does not express "the consistent unity of a single developing tradition . . . Rather, it is a regular incorporation of common themes within otherwise autonomous imagery." "Sharing, Intrusion, and Influence," 343.

District, c. 943 (Fig. 2.15).⁶⁰ Although the Gramam Durga lacks a Buffalo head at her feet, she has been executed with the same iconography. The Gramam Durga wears bracelets on her slim arms, a conical *mukuta*, well-defined *kuca banda*, and elegantly draped *dhoti*. Her upper hands hold a conch and discus, while her lower hands are positioned below her hip and in *abhaya mudra*.

Remembering the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*'s claim that its members were favored with the grace of many goddesses (Lakshmi, Bhagavati, Durga, etc.), it seems possible that the Ainnurruvar maintained a special connection with them through ritual practice. The Melnangavaram Korravai would have operated on many iconic levels for its patrons, indexing the organization's prestige and piety, and perhaps serving as an embodiment of Durga herself. The Korravai image also would have been recognizable to non-Ainnurruvar, probably attracting their devotion, as it hardly seems possible that devotees familiar with icons like the Gramam Standing Durga would have treated the Melnangavaram Korravai as an ordinary object. The image itself attests to this point: despite the 'weathering' due to its outdoor location, the Melnangavaram Korravai's face and breasts are more eroded than other parts, likely resulting from many years of ritual libations, which tend to smooth these areas.

The practice of adorning a written dedication or decision with a sculpture of a deity was not unique to merchants. For instance, we might compare the Korravai merchant stone to a stone carved with an elephant head, possibly representing Ganesha, which is now located in the Jakarta National Museum (Fig. 2.16). It is inscribed with Old Javanese and Tamil scripts which are paleographically assignable to around the late

⁶⁰ Victorious Durgas commonly appear in temples, but are difficult to photograph because usually they are robed. The Standing Durga featured here is nearly identical with the exception of the missing buffalo head.

thirteenth century.⁶¹ While the original find site of the statue is unknown, both inscriptions record an army commander's donation on the behalf of a Buddhist Javanese king, whose identity is unclear. We might ask if its patrons intended the elephant as an embodiment of Ganesha, which would have communicated auspiciousness to the stone's viewers. Alternatively, the elephant head might have been an emblem associated with the army commander donor or Javanese king. In another example, the top of a fourteenth century "boundary stone" from Hampi has been adorned by a bull (*nandi*), Shiva's mount, and a standing devotee carved in low relief below it (Fig. 2.17).⁶² Other inscriptions from the Hampi region have referred to boundary stones bearing attributes of Shiva as *lingas*, suggesting that the boundary stone patrons invoked the authority of the god himself in claiming land as personal property. Although these two examples need further study, they demonstrate that merchants, in patronizing formally similar stones, employed a preexisting visual format that conflated official text and religious icon.

Analyzing merchant stones as a material phenomenon deployed by south Indian merchant groups lends itself to the argument that their self-perceived unity, expressed through written and visual texts, functioned as a means to achieving and projecting power in different locales. Their varied formats and display of symbols demonstrates many connections with contemporary groups and their associated visual systems, which in turn derive from established traditions of royal, martial, and agricultural iconography. Combining these systems allowed the merchants to appeal to a wide variety of social

⁶¹ Karashima, "Tamil Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China," *AMCA*, 13-14.

⁶² In 1977, the sculpture was in the Hampi Museum. See C.T.M. Kotriash, "Boundary Stones: A Study," *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 4 (1977), 42-55.

classes through the public format of merchant stones. The written Ainnurruvar *praśasti* travelled even further than the stones, appearing in many variations across south India and Southeast Asia. Exploring these written texts also demonstrates the existence of circularity between elite and non-elite populations. Both royal and non-royal *praśasti* elaborate upon one another, translating themes, images, and phraseology so much that it is impossible to cite a single literary origin for either. Viewing the *praśasti* alongside merchant stones thus elucidates some of the more nuanced aspects of Tamil merchant culture.

CHAPTER 3: CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY IN STONE

The previous chapter analyzed the form and content of several eulogies (*praśasti*) and freestanding stones patronized by the Ainnurruvar merchant organization. I argue that in both lyrical content and formal expression, these objects and texts allowed the Ainnurruvar to assert a cosmopolitan identity while connecting elite and non-elite populations. This chapter considers some of the Ainnurruvar's larger scale commissions, stone temple architecture patronized and constructed in south India. Many of these temples are inscribed with Ainnurruvar *praśasti* or inscriptions recording an individual member's or group's donations, frequently money, oil lamps, cattle, and land. In rare cases, inscriptions inform us that the Ainnurruvar constructed/commissioned (*ehupittu*) architectural elements of the temple, such as a pillared hall, staircase, or sculpture. Through architectural patronage, Ainnurruvar members demonstrated their piety and generosity to the entire local community. In addition to refurbishing the temple the Ainnurruvar also donated funds to support religious festivals, the tenure of religious leaders at *mathas* (institutions of religious learning), and the distribution of food to Brahmins. For example, an inscription at Tirukannapuram in Tanjavur district allocates money towards refurbishing the temple roof and "ensuring the livelihood of the *matha*'s leader."¹ Another thirteenth century inscription from Tittandatanapuram in Ramanathapuram describes that merchants from many organizations, including some with ties to Sri Lanka, used a percentage of their collective commercial profits to erect a

¹ *AMCA* 26. See Appendix 1.

maṇḍapa in honor of the temple's goddess.² The abundance and content of such inscriptions proves that temple construction was an essential activity for the Ainnurruvar. This is proved not only by the temples studied in this chapter, but also by the fact that they appear to have constructed temples wherever they settled overseas, exemplified by the Shiva temple in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, which will be studied in the next chapter.

Studying the temples reveals that the Ainnurruvar were active patrons of art and architecture throughout the ninth and thirteenth centuries. Some of these temples have inscriptions authored by the Ainnurruvar over several centuries, showing that the township was an outpost of mercantile activity for multiple generations. Others have solitary but lengthy and important Ainnurruvar inscriptions, which indicates that the Ainnurruvar might have used the temple for a short time only. In this section, I shall examine five temples bearing major Ainnurruvar inscriptions. Attempting to provide breadth in my analysis, I have chosen temples that were constructed in five different time periods and regions, organizing them in roughly chronological order (Map 20). The temples include: the mid-tenth century Manavalesvara temple at Tiruvelvikkudi in Tamil Nadu's fertile Kaveri Delta region, near the Chola capital at Tanjavur; the eleventh century Ramasvamy temple at Tirunelveli in southernmost Tamil Nadu, the traditional capital of the Pandya dynasty; the eleventh or twelfth century Mudigondesvara at Mudigonda in Karnataka's Mysore district, on the border zone with northern Tamil country; the Tiruvalisvarar at Valikandapuram, which was constructed between the tenth and eleventh centuries with major renovations and additions in the thirteenth century,

² *AMCA* 32. See Appendix 1.

located in the cotton-producing Ariyalur (Perambalur) district north of Tiruchirappalli,³ and finally, the late twelfth or thirteenth century Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar temple at Koyilpatti, in the arid Pudukkottai district of central Tamil Nadu.

Analyzing the individual temples is fruitful for several reasons. The inscriptions inform us that each temple was central to a highly mobile world of trade and commerce, in which individuals moved freely across regional borders. At Koyilpatti for example, a fourteenth century inscription records a meeting of merchant representatives from no less than five different Ainnurruvar branches in the Tamil region. At this meeting, they agreed to assign a collective sales tax on selected merchandise, which was to be donated to the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar temple at Koyilpatti. The artistic style of these temples also points to the highly mobile character of individuals, as close inspection shows that artisans and workshops worked on multiple commissions in different regions. In the below descriptions of Ainnurruvar patronized temples, I have attempted to relate temples that on the basis of stylistic grounds seem to have been produced by a single workshop. In this respect I build on Leslie Orr's work, who in an important article critiques the historiographical assumption that the Pandyan (southern) and Chola (middle) regions were politically and functionally distinct.⁴ In particular, Orr challenges the contention that these two royal courts developed their own distinctive architectural styles. By comparing the groundplans and elevations of contemporaneous temples in locations that have traditionally been deemed Pandyan or Chola territory, she demonstrates that several

³ L. Thiagarajan makes a thorough study of the relatively unstudied region in his dissertation, *Historical Archaeology of the Ariyalur Region up to A.D. 1817-A Study* (Unpublished dissertation), Bharathidasan University, Ariyalur, 1999; I have relied on his work for knowledge of the area.

⁴ Leslie Orr, "Cholas, Pandyas, and 'Imperial Temple Culture' in Medieval Tamilnadu," in *The Temple in South Asia*, edited by Adam Hardy, (London: British Association for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007) 83-104.

temples are almost stylistically identical. She then suggests that rather than thinking of monarchs as “agents of change” in religious ideology or art form, “we attend to the ways in which variations and transformations were related to the complex and shifting backdrop of regional and local on the ground realities.”⁵ Orr’s contention that we look beyond the aesthetic desires of royal personas as explanations of style to the “on the ground realities” is a suggestion well worth following.

While it is possible to suggest shared workshops for a few individual temples, it is impossible to propose the existence of ‘an Ainnurruvar style.’ The architectural style of temples studied below generally reflects regional idioms. That is to say, they do not present a formally coherent patron identity. This observation differs from other studies of patronage in Tamil region temple architecture. Padma Kaimal, for example, has argued that certain patrons used architectural form as an outward expression of a group identity. Her study of the queen Nangai Bhuti Aditya Pidariyar’s early tenth century architectural commissions in the Tamil country suggests a link between familial patronage and architectural style.⁶ Kaimal observes that Nangai’s temples share many stylistic features with her natal family’s commissions, from which she posits the existence of an “Irrukuvel family style,” attributable to a single workshop in the Kaveri Delta Macro-region. No such conclusion can be drawn from looking at Ainnurruvar patronized temples. There seems to be no distinctive sculptural or architectural program (i.e. “the quantity, shape, and arrangement of superstructure components, wall niches,

⁵ Orr points out that non-royal patrons constructed most Tamil region temples. Ibid., 93, 98.

⁶ This is one of the few empirical arguments about the relationship between style and patronage in Tamil region temples. Padma Kaimal, "A Man's World? Gender, Family, and Architectural Patronage in Medieval India." *Archives of Asian Art* 53 (2002/2003).

niche sculptures, wall faceting, and basement moldings”) that would suggest reliance on a single formal type.⁷ In other words, the formal composition of individual Ainnurruvar temples did not function as expressions of collective Ainnurruvar identity. Therefore a study of merchant patronized temples necessarily departs from the historiographical norm of associating artistic style with an individual patron’s personality.

More broadly, however, these temples share much in common on the larger level of style; here I follow Michael Meister’s characterization of style as “an accumulation of general characteristics that reflect a broad cultural grouping.”⁸ Looking to any one of the hundreds of temples constructed between the tenth and fourteenth centuries in the Tamil region, I observe that regardless of patronage—merchant, queen, or king—and despite minor variations of architectural form and ornament, nearly all replicate the architectural vocabulary of the Tamil-Dravida style (Fig. 3.1). This will become even more apparent in the next chapter, in which I reconstruct the ruined Shiva temple in Quanzhou, southern China. Based on this evidence, I hypothesize that the utilization of the Tamil-Dravida style represented a conscious choice of its makers and patrons, signaling their transregional identity to a larger community. This reading becomes more plausible through unpacking the connotations the Tamil-Dravida style carried in medieval south India. Thus, before I introduce the individual Ainnurruvar patronized temples, I include a section that attempts to define the Dravida style as it might have been understood by select premodern individuals.

Finally, in order to foreground the next chapter’s reconstruction of the Quanzhou Shiva temple, I offer examples of some Tamil region temples that were constructed in the

⁷ Ibid, 30.

⁸ Michael Meister, “Style and Idiom in the Art of Uparāmala, *Muqarnas* 10, 350.

same period, and therefore the most stylistically related. They were constructed in the time period that has been referred to as the later Chola period (1070-1280), and thus closely parallel the style of the Quanzhou Shiva temple, which was constructed in 1281.⁹

Before continuing, I want to attend to a tricky area of this study—which is to account for the craftsmen responsible for the physical construction of temples, the techniques used in completing them, and the architectural manuals followed. Unfortunately, we know precious little about these details. Our study of inscriptions shows that it was not common practice to record details about architectural construction. While medieval Tamil inscriptions record the names and titles of donors, they seldom identify anyone as having physically constructed the temples. The vast majority of inscriptions record details about “arrangements relating to temple affairs . . . mak[ing] explicit and public the identity of the donor, the nature of the gift, and details about how the endowment is to be put to use in order to maintain worship in the temple.”¹⁰ In the occasional reference to the temple’s construction, the moneyed patron might appear (i.e. ‘so-and-so who caused this temple to be built’), thus there are the rare inscriptions that state an Ainnurruvar patron commissioned the monument. However, the information most pertinent to traditional art historical studies (documents recording monetary negotiations between patron and architect, sketches of elevations and ground plans, sources for building supplies, wages and work schedules of masons and carpenters, etc.) is unavailable. In the absence of this material, scholars have struggled to connect the

⁹ See S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Later Chola Temples: Kulottunga I to Rajendra III (A.D. 1070-1280)*, (Madras: Mudgala Trust, 1979).

¹⁰ Leslie Orr, *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamilnadu*, South Asia Research, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

formal appearance of temples to the human agents who facilitated their construction. While inscriptions inform us about ritual endowments, land donations, and the social status of donors, the deliberations between patron and architect in deciding upon the temple's style are largely unknown.¹¹

Although none of the Ainnurruvar inscriptions studied here shed light on the mechanics of temple construction, it is likely that merchant donors employed skilled artisans and craftsmen to erect the monuments. Vijaya Ramaswamy has written an important article on craftsmen in early medieval peninsular India, basing her study on Tamil epigraphy dating from between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Ramaswamy states that in temple construction, five groups of craftspeople emerge as the most important: goldsmiths, brass smiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, and masons.¹² In every category, however, she notes that there were significant disparities in wages owing to distinctions between mere laborers and master artisans. In general, blacksmiths and carpenters were not as well paid professions. She records that these artisans frequently resided in streets around the temple, and moreover, that their prosperity was directly linked to the growth of commercial networks and mercantile prosperity. Concurring with James Heitzman, she writes that from the tenth century onwards, "the growth of nagarams (commercial centers) was in tandem with the emergence of craft and commercial corporations and the development of temple towns."¹³ Intriguingly, this is

¹¹ Zainab Bahrani observes that in the somewhat parallel case of Ancient Near Eastern art, where names of artists also were not recorded, "questions of authorship and of patronage . . . become merged." *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 98.

¹² Vijaya Ramaswamy, "Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004), 549.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 558.

not the only point of connection between mercantile and artisan organizations.

Ramaswamy records that the above five groups of craftspeople frequently banded together to form a transregional organization known as the Vishwakarma kula.

Vishwakarma, who in mythology was Brahma's son, was known as "the lord of the arts" and "carpenter of the gods." Just as the Ainnurruvar authored *praśasti*, several inscriptions record that the Vishwakarma also used *praśasti*.¹⁴ The relationship between these two organizations is an area for future research. Whatever the case, it seems as if there was a clear division of labor among the artisans themselves, and that the Ainnurruvar's role in facilitating temple construction was purely as financial donor and patron.

Defining Dravida

The Dravida style was the Tamil country's primary architectural mode between 900-1300, and is remarkable for its relative uniformity over great distance and time. While prevalent in the Tamil region, Dravida style architecture appears in Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh. Formally, "a rectangular flat-roofed nave, called the *ardhamanḍapa*, lead[s] into a square flat-roofed sanctuary which supports a tower, both the latter together being called the *vimāna*."¹⁵ The *vimāna* is raised on a base (*adhiṣṭhāna*) that supports flat walls, frequently broken by projected niches holding

¹⁴ In modern Tamil Nadu the Vishwakarma is a distinct caste. Their origin myths are contained in the the Tamil language *Vishwakarma Puranam*, which was probably compiled in the eighteenth century. Ibid., 564.

¹⁵ Douglas Barrett, *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture, 866-1014 A.D.*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 26.

sculptures (Fig. 3.1). The superstructure consists of a multistoried pyramid shape, which Michael Meister describes in detail:

[The superstructure's] upper storeys suggest pillared pavilions set at the center of terraces. They are enclosed by cloisters of subordinate structures consisting of square domed pavilions on the corners (called *kūtas*) and intermediate rectangular halls with barrel-vaulted roofs (called *śālās*) that are connected by sections of a barrel vaulted portico or balustrade (*hāra*). At its center, the uppermost terrace supports a structure Stella Kramrisch has called the "high temple": this has a wall-frieze or "necking" (*grīvā*) supporting a domed roof.¹⁶

The Dravida style has two major variants: Tamil and Deccano, which are associated with the Tamil and Karnataka regions respectively.¹⁷ Ajay Sinha has contrasted the Tamil-Dravida's additive morphology with the monolithic appearance of Deccano-Dravida temples. While both typologies are variants of the Kūtina formal type (typified by hut-shaped buildings adorning the superstructure), the Deccano-Dravida form "appears as if it were a cell excavated out of a live matrix of rock, as in cave architecture."¹⁸ By contrast, Tamil-Dravida style temples are adorned by "huts" (*kūtas*) that are carved in high relief, suggesting the appearance of actual balconies and dormer windows rendered in stone. The Tamil-Dravida style was used in most of the Hindu

¹⁶ Michael Meister, "Prāsāda as Palace: Kūtina Origins of the Nāgara Temple," *Artibus Asiae* 49, no. 3/4 (1988-1989), 255.

¹⁷ M.A. Dhaky distinguishes Lower (Tamil) Dravida architectural style from Upper (Deccano) Dravida, respectively in modern Tamil and Karnataka regions. This is reflected in the volume titles of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* series.

¹⁸ Sinha, *Imagining Architects*, 40.

monumental commissions in the medieval Tamil region, and employed by royal and non-royal patrons alike.¹⁹ It is visible, for instance, in the *vimāna* (central sanctum) of the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram (Fig. 3.2). Commissioned by the Chola monarch, Rajaraja II (r. 1146-73), the elevation of the Airavatesvara can be divided into the three main structural components of plinth, wall, and superstructure. Each of the central sanctum's walls is ornamented with sculptural pilasters, square pavilions on the two exterior corners (*kūta*), horseshoe pavilions (*pañjara*) on either interior side, and a barrel-vaulted rectangular pavilion (*śālā*) at its center. The superstructure (*sikhara*) rises to a height of four storeys, and on every level the pattern of pavilions repeats itself.

Current definitions of Dravida depend heavily on twentieth century scholarship, which derived this term from the study of the *śāstras*, palm leaf texts that delineate socio-religious practices, including architecture and sculpture. For example, Stella Kramrisch, in her seminal study of Indian temple architecture and ritual, read the *śāstras* as containing literal descriptions of ritual activity, architectural and sculptural forms. She believed the term Dravida referred to a temple type common to southern India.²⁰ However, as many subsequent scholars have concluded, the meaning of Dravida is far from clear in the *śāstras*. It might refer to temples with an octagonal capstone adorning their superstructure, a "school" of craftsmen, or one of India's three primary architectural styles associated with its northern, southern and, middle regions (Nagara, Dravida, and

¹⁹ K. V. Soundara Rajan observes stylistic unity from the Pallava period (sixth century) to the early Pandya period (ninth century), and that "except for certain variations in layout and elevational profile, the developments [in Tamil country] are the logical extensions of concepts in earlier Pallava attempts . . . the main story of architectural formulations goes forward with a remarkable degree of continuity." From "Early Pandya, Muttarayar and Irukkuvel Architecture," *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, ed. Pramod Chandra, (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1967), 245.

²⁰ Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 2 vols., (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 286.

Vesara, respectively). Another interpretation of the term Dravida is purely spiritual: when taken *in tandem* with Nagara and Vesara forms, it “implies not only the wholeness of India, but also the completeness of the three Gunas, and the other ternaries as symbols of totality: three world ages, three Principles of manifestation, three great Gods, three castes, etc.”²¹ Nevertheless, twentieth century scholars extracted three architectural modes from the *śāstras*: Dravida; Nagara; and Vesara, applying them to formal typologies visible in India’s religious monuments. This approach proves especially problematic because no known temple or sculpture reproduces *śāstric* models, prompting Samuel Parker to conclude that in fact, the *śāstras* were not intended as architectural manuals, and “were written for didactic purposes and aimed at non-practitioners.”²²

Jouveau-Dubreuil, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, authored two texts, *Dravidian Architecture* and *Iconography of Southern India*, both of which were foundational to formulating the Dravida style.²³ He convincingly develops a stylistic chronology outlining the historical sequence of architectural style in the temples located along the Northern Pennar River to Cape Comorin. For the first time there was a concise guide that named the components of Dravida style architecture according to the terminology mentioned in the *śāstras*.²⁴ Subsequent studies followed Jouveau-Dubreuil’s lead, using a listing methodology to record the architectural components of individual

²¹ Ibid., 294.

²² Parker, “Text and Practice,” 5.

²³ Note that Jouveau-Dubreuil’s labels south Indian architecture “Dravidian” instead of “Dravida.” By using ethnic as opposed to architectural terminology, Jouveau-Dubreuil gestures at early 20th century politics, when heated debates over the Aryan-Dravidian divide occurred regularly. Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture*, (Varanasi: Bharat-Bharati, 1972).

²⁴ *Iconography of Southern India*, *Iconography of Southern India*, (Varanasi: Bharatiya Pub. House, 1978), 3.

temples. These studies compiled technical architectural vocabulary from temple inscriptions and *śāstras*, making them accessible to wider audiences.²⁵ Douglas Barrett's *Early Cola Architecture*, for example, provides detailed diagrams of *vimāna* bases and *ardhamanḍapa* layouts, and assigns each type to a different Chola king's reign. Although the work received much criticism (his detractors cited temples that did not fit Barrett's schema, usually on the basis of epigraphy), the listing methodology continued in subsequent studies.²⁶

That Tamil region temples remain relatively stylistically consistent between 900-1300 becomes more apparent when compared with the stylistically diverse temples from the neighboring region of Karnataka. Ajay Sinha has studied these monuments closely, particularly those built in the Vesara style, which are noteworthy for integration of Nagara (the architectural style associated with north India) and Dravida architectural morphologies. Sinha concludes that the diversity of architectural styles "demonstrates a deliberate attempt on the part of their makers to modify regional traditions" as well as "a regional modality of responding to the architectural world of the eleventh century."²⁷ Sinha emphasizes the makers' *agency* in constructing temples, arguing that eleventh century Karnataka provided a particularly fertile palette for its architects, enabling them to build monuments that functioned as creative commentary on the period's architectural

²⁵ Heitzmann employs this term to describe previous historical studies on irrigation in early South India, which equally applies to art historical studies. As he writes that 'listing' methodology "produces a number of categories applicable to the topic and then describes the contents of the historical records that apply to the categories." *Gifts of Power*, 37.

²⁶ See especially S.R. Balasubrahmanyam's series on Chola temples: *Early Chola Temples; Parantaka I to Rajaraja I, A.D. 907-985*, (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1971); *Middle Chola Temple : Rajaraja I to Kulottunga I, A.D. 985-1070*, (Faridabad: Thomson Press (India), Publication Division, 1975); *Later Chola Temples: Kulottunga I to Rajendra III (A.D. 1070-1280)*, (Madras: Mudgala Trust, 1979).

²⁷ Ajay Sinha, *Imagining Architects: Creativity in the Religious Monuments of India*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 21; 29.

landscape. He acknowledges that his approach is radically different from previous studies of Indian architecture, which evaluate formal change within an evolutionary teleology or “a process of organic growth and mutation,” thereby voiding the agency of the building’s makers. He criticizes Adam Hardy’s influential study of temple architecture, which posits that an abstract rationale, that of “divine manifestation,” governed temple form in medieval Karnataka for seven centuries.²⁸ This concept of divine manifestation was articulated by Stella Kramrisch to describe how “the formless, eternal divine force of Hinduism is made visible and approachable as images in this world.”²⁹ Kramrisch expounds upon the direct relation of this concept to architectural form: the inner sanctum of the temple is austere and dark, functioning as a metaphor for a womb, with the god inside as its seed. As the god manifests itself, his power radiates outward, resulting in the temple’s decorative exterior, itself an analogy for fecundity and prosperity. Hardy sees this concept as the primary explanation for the morphology of the entire region’s temple architecture. Whereas before the concept of divine manifestation served as a general explanation for the temple’s overall form, it is now the governing logic behind individual architectural components. He likens the “aedicule” or *kūṭa* (hut-shaped structure) to a seed, which over time expands and transforms to ultimately become the exuberant twelfth and thirteenth century stellate-plan temples from Hoysala territory. As Sinha notes, this explanation neglects the practical considerations faced and

²⁸ Ibid., 29.

²⁹ Michael Meister, “On the Development of a Morphology for a Symbolic Architecture: India,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 12 (Autumn 1986), 34. See also Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 2 vols, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1976).

initiatives made by architects.³⁰ Instead, architectural details and historical contexts of individual sites disappear into a master plan narrative.

Like Sinha, I am interested in the ways in which Tamil region architecture displays mediations between the architect and his world, and believe that the architectural forms were a conscious selection on the part of the maker and patron, who would have had familiarity with a wide range of architectural types and multiple formal choices when planning a monument. And yet, medieval period monuments from the Tamil region do not yield easily to this analysis, because nearly every freestanding structural architectural commission in Tamil country from this period (royal and non royal alike) utilizes the Tamil-Dravida's uniform decorative and structural format.

Turning to inscriptional evidence elucidates the meaning of formal repetition in the Tamil region, for multiple inscriptions communicate the architect's effort to reproduce precisely the Tamil-Dravida style's intricate forms. This is evidenced by a remarkable eleventh century inscription, which provides detailed information about architect, building materials, and architectural components. It appears on the Adipurisvara temple's central shrine at Tiruvorriyur, located roughly ten kilometers north of Chennai, and records that the

Marvelous srivimāna for Siva in Adipuri was built of dense, compact, dark
hued stone of excellent quality (flawless) with many *tōraṇas* and pilaster
types, *kūṭas*, *kōśthas*, *nīḍas* (*pañjaras*), and diverse varieties of pillars
(*bahuvidah charaṇaḥ*), *nāsikas* with lion crests (*mṛigapati-vadana*) was
built by the artisan Ravi at the pleasure of Rajendra, son of Rajaraja. This

³⁰ *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation: The Karnata Dravida Tradition, 7th to 13th Centuries*, (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts : Abhinav Publications, 1995), 25-27.

trīṭala (three storey) *vimāna* called Adipurisvara dedicated to Śambhu (Shiva) was in accordance with the canon of (as directed by) Chaturānana *paṇḍita* (the priest) and executed by the architect (*tachchan*) Virachola Ravi.³¹

Praise is heaped on the architect for successful execution of specific architectural components, rather than his individual creative genius. The architectural components mentioned in the inscription are visible in the temple's current fabric (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4). Constructed in three levels, the superstructure is comprised of well-defined pavilions (*kūṭas*, *śālās*, and *pañjaras* [dormer frontons]). A sharp recess (*hāra*), resembling a corridor that wraps around the building, punctuates each level. Thus the Adipurisvara evinces an "additive" appearance typical of Tamil-Dravida style. By listing the beauty of individual architectural components, the Adipurisvara patrons possibly intended to emphasize the power conveyed through their differentiation. Moreover, the inscription demonstrates that architects were capable of achieving high rank within society. Virachola Ravi not only assumes a title associated with the Chola lineage (Virachola means "the heroic Chola"), but is mentioned twice within the text: firstly, as the artisan and secondly, as the architect. His most acclaimed skill seems to have been the successful replication of architectural forms.

While I know of no other inscription that praises the architect for his execution of forms typical of the Tamil-Dravida tradition, many other inscriptions contain detailed lists of architectural components appearing on the temple, and similarly suggest that their

³¹ My adaptation of Dhaky's translation in *EITA*, 251. Original text in P.R. Srinivasan's "A Sanskrit Inscription of the Time of Rajendra Chola I from Tiruvorriyur." *Journal of Oriental Research* 32, no. I-IV (1962-63): 11-15. The inscription also appears in Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, 299-309; *SHI* 4, no. 553; and ARE 126 of 1912.

faithful reproduction was an important measure of a monument's success. In many cases, donors gave funds for particular components, marked by inscriptions appearing on the named sections of the temple. One such inscription was evidently considered to be of such importance that it was reinscribed in the same location after the older temple was renovated: the early thirteenth century inscription from Nattamangudi, Tiruchirappalli District states that just as in the older temple, this donation was to be reinscribed on the *jagatīppadai* (the *jagatī* is the lowermost portion of the *adiṣṭhāna*). K.G. Krishnan has collected a wealth of inscriptions from temple walls across the Tamil region containing architectural terminology, from which we learn that a surprising number of these terms remain constant over long distances and time periods, forming an identifiable corpus of Tamil-Dravida vocabulary throughout the Tamil region.³² These inscriptions, when taken with the Tamil region's architectural landscape, suggest an aesthetic ideal of uniformity to which Tamil region architects and patrons aspired. As architects in the medieval Deccan strived towards creative commissions, borrowing from and adapting multiple regional typologies, Tamil architects reproduced almost standardized versions of Tamil-Dravida style temples, albeit in diverse local idioms.

My study is not the first to propose the premodern Tamil region's architectural uniformity as a key indicator of the period's political networks. The social sciences have been more attentive to this phenomenon than art historians, but have tended to make unsupported arguments about the architectural mode's uniformity as indexical of the king's paramount authority; James Heitzman, for example has argued that "the kings created systems of endowments that were remarkably uniform and encouraged the

³² K.G. Krishnan, "Architectural Terms in South Indian Temple Inscriptions." In *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, edited by Pramod Chandra, (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), 307-17.

continuation of monuments and cults that similarly exhibited stylistic uniformity throughout Tamil Nadu.”³³ One can infer a similar argument from R. Champakalakshmi, based on her analysis of Rajaraja I’s architectural genius, “whose stupendous project, the Rājarājeśvaram created the most prestigious temple of the *drāviḍa* style of architecture” which then served as a spiritual model for the entire region.³⁴ Burton Stein, while offering a divergent perspective on the medieval south Indian state, in which kings played more of a symbolic than actual role in governance, makes the same observation about Tamil region’s temples’ as being stylistically uniform. He then adduces that these ‘*canonical temples*’ were part of a larger template of cultural values in circulation, which allowed self-governing institutions to participate in a “macroregion of distinctive and homogenous cultural quality.”³⁵ Thus, reproducing standardized cultural forms enabled the smallest village to participate in the decentralized segmentary state.

Art historical research, by contrast, has ignored the issue of the medieval Tamil region’s architectural uniformity. Most works on the region’s architecture provide thick descriptions of individual temple’s architectural components and associated inscriptions, the underlying aim being to accurately date and attribute the temple’s authorship to an individual Chola king. These descriptions have generally been organized into three temporal periods corresponding to the reigns of Chola kings: Early, Middle, and Late Chola.³⁶ At the same time, studies in the social sciences have excluded the rich data gathered in these studies from their arguments.

³³ James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power*, 115.

³⁴ R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology, and Urbanization*, 427.

³⁵ Italics are mine for emphasis. Stein, “Historical Geography of the Tamil Country,” 17.

³⁶ For example, S.R. Balasubrahmyam’s four volume series on temple architecture uses these divisions.

While I am unable to bridge the vast divide between methods and findings of the disciplines described above, this chapter attempts to bring them closer together. On the one hand, I argue that there is some substance in the social scientist's claim of stylistic homogeneity. On the other hand, I recognize the value of the thick descriptions of temple architecture provided in art historical studies, and, as I have argued above, contend that the reproduction of recognized architectural vocabulary within the Tamil region might have signaled something important to its makers and patrons: a shared artistic and cultural community. I argue that the relative uniformity of Tamil-Dravida architecture displays conscientious deliberations between architect and patron—what politics this choice might have expressed is still unknown. However, the appearance of this relative uniformity across long distances and time periods, rather than indicating an oppressive, centralized government, points to the existence of polycentric networks that transmitted architectural knowledge. These networks enabled stylistically similar temples to coexist in radically different spaces and times.

Ainnurruvar Patronized Temples

This section examines five Dravida style temples that were important sites of Ainnurruvar patronage. It identifies common workshops responsible for temple construction whenever possible.

Tiruvelvikkudi (Tiruvilakudi)

Modern Tiruvelvikkudi is a quiet village located roughly thirty-five miles northeast of Tanjavur, in Mayavaram taluk. An undated inscription on the central shrine

of the Manavalesvara (Shiva) temple records that the Nanadesi Tisai-Ayirattainnurruvar and the Valanjiyar sponsored the construction of a quarter of a stone temple in Tiruvelvikkudi. These funds were donated on their behalf by Tiruvelvikkudi-Nambi *alias* Tiruvaiyaru Yogyiar and his son, Tirukarrali Pittar.³⁷ While the identities of the latter two individuals is somewhat ambiguous, there is a strong possibility that they were the chief architect and mason. “Tirukarrali” translates as “holy stone temple,” and a record from the nearby Gomuktisvara temple in the village of Tiruvadaturai states that an individual named “Tirukarrali Pichchan,” acted as the temple’s chief mason in 932.³⁸ It is unlikely that these two records refer to the same person, because the earliest firmly dated inscription at Tiruvelvikkudi is from nearly forty years later, in 969.³⁹ Based on inscriptional and stylistic evidence, Douglas Barrett and Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer both conclude that the temple was constructed by 959 CE, but it is quite possible that it was completed even earlier.⁴⁰

The partnering of the Valanjiyar and Ainnurruvar is a fascinating example of transregional collaboration. The Valanjiyar, like the Ainnurruvar, was a transregional merchant organization, its name appearing independently as well as in conjunction with the Ainnurruvar in inscriptions. The organization’s full title, Tenilangai Valanjiyar,

³⁷ *SII* 19, no. 459

³⁸ *ARE* 132 of 1925. This is one of the few records from the Tamil region that refers to an architect explicitly. A roughly contemporary inscription, around 944-5, (*ARE* 143 of 1925) states that the Chola monarch, Parantaka I, donated gold for the Gomuktisvara temple at Tiruvadaturai to be constructed from the “*kudappadai* upwards,” an unidentifiable architectural term, leading Balasubrahmanyam and Barrett to debate about its construction date.

³⁹ *SII* 19, no. 27.

⁴⁰ A lion pillar, stylistically coherent with pillars from the ninth century Agastyesvara temple at Kilaiyur, is located on the temple grounds, suggesting an earlier date; lion pillars were used extensively in Pallava period monuments.

meaning “the Southern Sri Lankan Valanjiyar,” appears in several inscriptions, leading scholars to suggest the organization’s Sri Lankan ties. Whatever the case may be, enough instances exist in which the two organizations’ names are combined (e.g. the Valanjiyar-Ainnurruvar) to suggest a blurring of boundaries.⁴¹ In fact, the record at Tiruvelvikkudi is not the first instance of the two groups acting jointly as architectural patrons: a fragmentary inscription from Pudukkottai district refers to an unidentified tank named “the Ainnurruvar tank” gifted by the Valanjiyar and Ainnurruvar during the reign of Vijayalaya Chola (866-871).⁴²

That these two groups collaborated to construct a quarter of the Manavalesvara’s building further complicates the notion of temple patronage as an exclusively elite activity. Numerous unnamed individuals might have contributed funds in order for the Ainnurruvar and Valanjiyar to receive recognition on behalf of all its members. The donation’s communal nature probably enabled individuals, who otherwise might not have been able to contribute to the expensive enterprise of temple construction, to claim responsibility for its creation. Other inscriptions at the same temple name at least sixteen groups and individuals who sponsored small portions of the building or images. It was possible to receive credit for donating something as small as three stones near the stone sculpture guarding the central sanctum (*dvarapala*),⁴³ or a doorjamb.⁴⁴ Another inscription records that the famous patroness-queen Sembiyan Mahadevi patronized the

⁴¹ Thiyagarajan, 113-115.

⁴² See *IPS* no. 61 and *ARE* 308 of 1964-5.

⁴³ *ARE* 148 of 1926

⁴⁴ *ARE* 150 of 1926.

temple, gifting a silver pitcher.⁴⁵ Sembian Mahadevi's pitcher appears to have been the only royal donation, demonstrating that a temple might receive elite and popular patronage simultaneously.

The temple complex adheres to a standard layout for medieval Tamil region temples. The visitor approaches on an east-west axis, passing a large tank (*kulam*) at the northeastern exterior. A modern gate sits atop the remains of a stone foundation, which probably formed the base of the original wall (*prakara*). After passing through a garden of fruit trees, the main temple grounds are entered through a tower-gateway (*gopura*). The interior grounds contain several stone structures, including a later period, smaller-scale, goddess temple at the northeast corner, which is oriented on a north-south axis, and four small shrines (two of which are modern) to subsidiary gods at the complex's westernmost end.

The Ainnurruvar inscription is located on the south wall of the central shrine, the oldest part of the temple. This portion consists of a *vimāna* and attached *ardhamanḍapa* of equal width, with an attached frontal porch (*mukhamanḍapa*) (Fig. 3.5). The porch, supported by pillars, provided two axial entrances approached by two staircases on the northern and southern sides.⁴⁶ Padma Kaimal points out that the central shrine was constructed in two phases within a short time period. The current architectural structure mostly reflects the first phase of construction, but the sculptures on the *vimāna* and the *ardhamanḍapa*'s facades represent a second phase, which I elaborate upon below. At

⁴⁵ ARE 128 of 1926.

⁴⁶ See Padma Kaimal, "The Problem of Portraiture in South India, Circa 870-970 A.D." *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 1/2 (1999), 92-96.

least two later period additions, including two additional *maṇḍapas*, tripled the structure's total length.⁴⁷

The entire temple sits on a base (*adiṣṭhāna*) rising to a height of 4'8", consisting of several moldings (Fig. 3.6): a lotus petal base (*padma*); a straight vertical plinth (*jagatī*); a torus with lotus petal details on top and bottom (*vṛtta kumuda*); a lively frieze of mythical lion-elephant creatures (*vyāla*), mounted by warriors wielding swords and shields (Fig. 3.7); a recess with plank moldings (*kaṇṭha*); and a cyma recta cornice (*vari*).

The wall's plain façade is broken by four pilasters (*kāl*) surrounding three original central niches (*dēvakōṣṭhas*) with arches (*tōraṇa*), and surmounted by a single storey (*ektāla*) superstructure. Because of renovation and repainting, it is impossible to determine whether the superstructure is original to the monument, but the corner square aedicules (*kūṭas*) and central barrel vaulted aedicule (*śālā*) are proportionate to the wall's height. The wall's sculptures, however, reveal extensive renovation, in which the niches probably were increased from three to eleven. These renovations are highly visible due to their rough execution, resulting in shallow rectangular recesses with rough edges much shorter in height than the three original *dēvakōṣṭhas* (Fig. 3.8). The deities include Ganesha, Nataraja, Agastya, and Dakshinamurti on the south wall; Vishnu, Lingodbhava, and Harihara on the western wall; and Brahma, Shiva and Candesha, a modern Durga, and Bhikshatana on the northern wall. Excepting the Dakshinamurti, Lingodbhava, and the modern Durga (likely replacing an older version) all sculptures appear to have been added in the second renovation (Figs. 3.9-3.19). The Nataraja and Agastya sculptures are made from red stone, the significance of which I elaborate on below.

⁴⁷ Later period renovations (ca. sixteenth century onwards) are important for conceptualizing temples in their entirety, but difficult to incorporate into a focused argument about the historic patronage of merchants. For this reason I mention them here, but refrain from analyzing them any further.

The second renovation likely occurred around 970, when Sembiyan Mahadevi transformed the formal composition of Kaveri Delta Region temples (modern Tanjavur, Mayavaram, and Kumbakonam taluks). The Chola queen has been the subject of several studies because of her extensive patronage, communicated by her inscriptions and the stylistic uniformity of her architectural commissions.⁴⁸ A striking characteristic of these is the increased number of *dēvakōṣṭhas* and deities: whereas before a typical temple had three niches around the *vimāna*, Sembiyan Mahadevi's had at least nine deities along the *vimāna* and *ardhamanḍapa*. The new iconographic program likely reflected changes in religious practice, which Sembiyan Mahadevi disseminated throughout the region through temple iconography. Kaimal convincingly demonstrates that Shiva in his form of Nataraja became important to the Chola family a few decades before Sembiyan Mahadevi's rule and that the queen herself was connected to the Nataraja cult in the nearby city of Chidambaram.⁴⁹ Multiple Kaveri Delta Region temples, dating from the later tenth century and bearing Sembiyan Mahadevi's inscriptions, exhibit this iconography. It is likely that the Manavalesvarar was renovated during this period, when roughly cut *dēvakōṣṭhas* were hastily executed to accommodate nine additional deities. The Manavalesvara is not the only temple to have changed its iconographic program to accord with Sembiyan's new standards: the roughly cut *devakōṣṭhas* of the Sakisvara temple at Tiruppurumbiyam demonstrate a similar renovation (Fig. 3.20).

⁴⁸ See B. Venkataraman *Temple Art under the Chola Queens*, (Faridabad: Thomson Press (India), Publication Division, 1976); Dehejia, *Art of the Imperial Cholas*, and Padma Kaimal "Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon." *Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (1999): 390-419.

⁴⁹ Kaimal, "Early Cola Kings," 62-63.

The Manavalesvara's fabric evinces connections with more distant locales, possibly resulting from common mercantile patronage. About thirty-five miles west of Tiruvelvikkudi, the Vatamulesvara temple at Kilappalavur (Kizhpalur), Ariyalur District, while not patronized directly by the Ainnurruvar, bears an inscription of the Valanjiyar. The Vatamulesvara temple's Valanjiyar affiliated patrons probably had connections with the Ainnurruvar, for the Valanjiyar appear as the Ainnurruvar's subsidiary agents in many inscriptions from the Ariyalur District. At Valikandapuram, for example, the Ainnurruvar arranged for two lamps to be lit in commemoration of a deceased member of the Valanjiyar.⁵⁰ L. Thiyagarajan, in a thorough study of the district's inscriptions, demonstrates that the Ariyalur region was a major trade center between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, having at least forty-four different *nagarams* comprised of different mercantile groups from the Tamil region.⁵¹ These groups shifted periodically: a stone charter in Gangaikondacholapuram referring to the Ainnurruvar-Valanjiyar suggests that the merchant organization relocated from Tanjavur to Gangaikondacholapuram when it was named the new Chola capital in 1025.⁵² Other records refer to "highways" (*peruvali*) that likely connected major urban centers of Gangaikondacholapuram, Tanjavur, and Chidambaram.⁵³

The architectural formats of the Manavalesvara and Vatamulesvara are nearly identical, but with two exceptions. At the Vatamulesvara, no *yāli* frieze appears on the *adiṣṭhāna* and tall *pañjaras* adorn the wall (Fig. 3.21). Hoekveld-Meijer dates it ca. 984

⁵⁰ *ARE* 308 of 1964-65.

⁵¹ Thiyagarajan, 105.

⁵² *ARE* 49 of 1908.

⁵³ Thiyagarajan, 119.

based on the *pañjaras*’ strange execution, which sit directly on the *kumuda* instead of protruding from the *paṭṭika* (Fig. 3.22).⁵⁴ Strikingly similar sculptures connect the two temples, however. The Vatamulesvara’s Nataraja, installed in the southern *ardhamañḍapa* wall, is carved of the same unique red stone used for the Manavalesvara’s Nataraja (Fig. 3.23). The sculptures have the same proportions, with taut triangular torsos, thighs raised perpendicular to the body, and shapely calves pointed at a forty-five degree angle. The adornments are nearly identical, including a cloth wrapped around the hips and midsection, simple coiled anklets, bracelets, and armbands. The Natarajas’ physiognomy is similar as well, with locks depicted in striated linear waves, arched eyebrows, and full lips, they appear to have been carved by the same hand or, at the very least, a common workshop. Both temples also prominently feature masterful depictions of the *Kalyanasundarar*, in which Shiva tenderly leads Parvati by the hand at their marriage ceremony. At the Manavalesvara, the subject appears in an exquisitely carved *tōraṇa* located directly above the Nataraja niche (Fig. 3.25), and at the Vatamulesvara, as a sculpture (scaled to three-quarters life size) adorning the eastern *ardhamañḍapa* entry (Fig. 3.24). The theme, while common to bronzes, appears less frequently in stone sculpture, illustrating a connection between the two sites. In both *Kalyanasundarar* scenes, the sensuous treatment of flesh and identical adornments imply the same master hand. Vidya Dehejia contends that a *Kalyanasundarar* bronze from the Manavalesvara temple indicates “the mature and assured style” of Sembiyan Mahadevi. Based on their

⁵⁴ The Vatamulesvara has several controversial inscriptions supposedly authored by Parantaka I ca. 919, leading Barrett and Balasubrahmanyam to debate its construction date. Balasubrahmanyam argues that the inscriptions are original, and Barrett that they are recopied, the latter author arguing for a later date on the basis of style. See Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer, *Koyils in the Colamandalam Typology and Development of Early Cola Temples: An Art-Historical Study Based on Geographical Principles*, (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, 1980), 132-134. Also see S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Four Chola Temples*, Heritage of Indian Art Series, (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1963), 30-33.

stylistic similarity, it is likely that the Manavalesvara's *tōraṇa* and the Vatamulesvara's sculpture are coeval with the bronze.⁵⁵ The Sembiyan Mahadevi style sculpture on both temples substantiates the hypothesis that trade networks facilitated the transmission of craftsmen and artistic style.

Cheranmadevi

Tirunelveli District, in Tamil Nadu's deep south, historically comprised part of the Pandya monarchy's territory. In traditional narratives of medieval South India, Pandyas and Cholas were bitter rivals, the latter dominating the former between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Rajendra I, who is credited with incorporating Kerala and Sri Lanka into Chola dominion, supposedly installed a Chola regent in the Pandyan capital of Madurai by 1018, establishing the "Chola-Pandya viceroys."⁵⁶ Following this narrative, art historical studies classified the region's temple architecture according to pre and post "Chola occupation."⁵⁷ Leslie Orr has challenged this, arguing that the Pandyas were more powerful throughout this period than previously perceived. She contends that the "Cholas' administrative authority in the Madurai region was scant and fleeting," and while its occupation was more pervasive around Tirunelveli, it was "less than complete."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Dehejia, *Art of the Imperial Cholas*, 5.

⁵⁶ Sastri, *The Cholas*, 202-3.

⁵⁷ For example, *EITA*, 123, and Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, 191-197.

⁵⁸ Orr surveys over three thousand inscriptions (eighth through thirteenth centuries) from Pandyan and Chola heartlands, including Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, and Chidambaram. Leslie Orr, "Cholas, Pandyas, and 'Imperial Temple Culture' in Medieval Tamilnadu," in *The Temple in South Asia*, edited by Adam Hardy, (London: British Association for South Asian Studies, The British Academy, 2007), 85.

In terms of evidence suggesting the Ainnurruvar's presence in Tamil Nadu's southernmost territories, Ambasamudram taluk in Tirunelveli has yielded many of the organization's inscriptions. Most date from the early eleventh century during the so-called Chola-Pandya viceroy period, informing us of the Ainnurruvar's collective power in the region. Most villages are situated around the Tamraparni River, which probably served as a major thoroughfare for commercial traffic. At the Ramasvamy temple in Cheranmadevi village,⁵⁹ an inscription dated 1036 states that the city council (*sabha*) designated an official street for Ainnurruvar residences and storehouses.⁶⁰ Another inscription from the same temple, dated 1021, states that an Ainnurruvar member took possession of cultivated land, the taxes on which funded temple rituals.⁶¹ In nearby Ambasamudram town at the Tirumulunatha Vishnu temple, yet another inscription records that the Ainnurruvar community lived in a private quarter of the city, granted land to the temple to accrue *dharma* for the larger Ainnurruvar community of Pandimandalam.⁶²

The Ramasvamy temple, devoted to Vishnu, is one of Cheranmadevi's most important temples.⁶³ Its earliest inscription dates from the reign of Rajaraja I, in which it

⁵⁹ Cheranmadevi was probably named for a Chera (Keralan) queen. Other contemporaneous inscriptions from the area reveal that the "Chola-Pandyan viceroy," Jatavarman Sundarachola-Pandya, had an uncle who was a Chera king (Chramanar Rajasimhadeva). N. Pankaja, "Cheranmadevi from Inscriptions," *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 30 (2004), 156-161.

⁶⁰ *SII* XIV, no. 143.

⁶¹ *ARE* 700 of 1916.

⁶² *SII* XIV, 146 and *ARE* 82 of 1907.

⁶³ Balasubrahmanyam compares Cheranmadevi to Kanchipuram for its abundance of medieval temples. There are at least eight major temples dating from the medieval period. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, 191.

is referred to as the Nigarilisola Vinnagar Alvar,⁶⁴ but numerous structures in the temple compound demonstrate that building continued at least until the Nayaka period. Its large scale may partially be functional, due to its dedication to Vishnu;⁶⁵ as in other Vaishnavite shrines from the Tamil country, it has three internal levels, each containing different images of the god.⁶⁶

The Ramasvamy temple's plan conforms to Dravida temple prototypes, having a square *garbhagr̥ha*, small transitional *maṇḍapa* (*antarala*), and rectangular *ardhamaṇḍapa*. The treatment of its walls, however, is unique and emphasizes the structure's monumentality (Fig. 3.26). Each of the central sanctum's sides has seven projections, none of which house sculptures, producing a rhythmic surface of undulating positive and negative space. These sections are virtually identical, save for the central one, which contains an empty ("false") *dēvakōṣṭha* topped by a miniature *kapōta* (Fig. 3.27). The *adiṣṭhāna* contains a rectangular *jagatī*, *tripaṭṭa kumuda*, and a rectangular *paṭṭika* separating two *kaṇṭha* levels. Each projection contains four *padas* (rectangular frames at each end of the *kaṇṭha*), which presents carved vegetal and figurative imagery. The "doubled" quality is reiterated by the twin *kāl*, which are rectangular (*brahmakaṇṭa*) and spring vertically from each projection, containing *mālāsthāna* (decorative fringe below pot), *laśuna* (pot), and *ghata* (cushion shaped part). *Pōṭigai* with angular

⁶⁴ ARE 180 of 1895.

⁶⁵ Leslie Orr notes that the number of Vishnu to Shiva shrines is much higher in Tirunelveli district (about 50-50) than the rest of the Tamil region (15-85). Orr, "Imperial Culture," 96-7.

⁶⁶ In the Ramasvamy temple, the ground floor is now empty, the second floor contains Veetrirunda Perumal, and the third contains Pallikonda Perumal with Sridevi, Bhudevi, Bhṛigu-rishi, and Markandeya. See Dennis Hudson's study of the Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kanchipuram for more information about three-storeyed Vishnu shrines in Tamil country. *The Body of God: An Emperor's Palace for Krishna in Eighth-Century Kanchipuram*, Edited by Margaret H. Case, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

projecting tenons appear immediately underneath the *kapōta*, which is decorated with two *nāsikas* (horseshoe arch decoration). The *nāsikas* are covered with intricate vegetal, geometric, and figural designs, including classical South Indian dance *karanas* (positions) (Fig. 3.28). The superstructure probably received continuous renovation from its creation onwards, but its current appearance most likely mimics the original form. It is made of brick and stucco, differentiated into *kūṭas*, *śālās*, and *pañjaras* (Fig. 3.29), and retains elaborate details, including a frieze of robust *vyālas* carved in high relief with front paws raised in mid-step, and brick sculptural images of Vishnu, located above the central projection of each wall (Fig. 3.30).

Comparison with other Cheranmadevi area temples implies that a single workshop constructed most of them. Located in the same village though lesser in scale, The Devasvamiyudaiyar temple's Amman (Goddess) temple has many architectural similarities (Fig. 3.31). While its central sanctum walls have the more standard tripartite projections, it possesses an *adiṣṭhāna* with double-tiered *kaṇṭha*, walls divided by rectangular pillars with false niches, and *pōṭigai* with angular tenons. Immediately above the *kapōta*, a *vyāla* frieze identical to the Ramasvamy's appears. In the same temple complex, an adjacent Shiva temple presents another variation of the Cheranmadevi temple type, with the distinctive *vyāla* frieze replacing the second *kaṇṭha* tier in the *adiṣṭhāna*, and reappearing above the *kapōta* (Fig. 3.32). Nearly ten miles to the northwest, the famous Tiruvalisvarar temple at Tiruvalisvaram is constructed in a nearly identical format to the Devasvamiyudaiyar's Shiva shrine, with the exception of its elaborate stone superstructure (Fig. 3.33). The installation of deities on the superstructure, as in the Devasvamiyudaiyar's Shiva shrine and the Ramasvamy temple,

seems to have been a local convention, in lieu of their typical placement in the *dévakōṣṭhas*. All temples possess inscriptions implying their construction during the reign of Rajaraja I (995-1010), making construction by a single workshop conceivable.⁶⁷

Mudigonda

Mudigonda, in southern Karnataka's Mysore district, was one of many towns located in the border zone between Tamil and Kannada speaking territories. Chapter One has shown that between the late tenth and twelfth centuries, a spate of Ainnurruvar inscriptions in southern Karnataka was accompanied by their sharp decline in the Tamil country, suggesting that various branches of the Ainnurruvar organization migrated northwards to Karnataka.⁶⁸ This was at least partially attributable to Rajaraja Chola I and his son, Rajendra I, who led several military campaigns into this region, defeating the Ganga kingship at their capital in Talakad (in modern Mysore district), a mere fifteen miles north of Mudigonda. It is likely that the newly conquered territories presented opportunities to merchant groups for expanding their base of commercial operations, and that they migrated there in the battles' aftermath. Beginning in ca. 991, inscriptions appearing on the walls of newly constructed Tamil-Dravida style temples proclaim the Chola kings' victories over the Ganga and Nolamba kingships and attest to Ainnurruvar patronage; multiple versions of the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* are associated with this region and time period.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See *EITA*, 122-123 and 263-4.

⁶⁸ See Chapter 1, "Tamil Merchants in World History," pp. 41-44.

⁶⁹ Two contemporaneous inscriptions from Kempanapura village in Chamarajnagar District demonstrate the presence of royal and mercantile patrons. One inscription, dated to 991, mentions Rajaraja I's military victories over the Ganga and Nolamba kingships, while the second records the Ainnurruvar's conversion of

The Mudigondesvara temple in Mudigonda offers compelling evidence for the larger argument that the Tamil-Dravida style was an important component of Ainnurruvar patronage, for its form clearly indicates that architects and artisans adapted local stylistic conventions (i.e. idiom) to create a Tamil-Dravida style monument.⁷⁰ It bears a Tamil language and script version of the Ainnurruvar *praśasti* roughly assignable to the early twelfth century, and was likely constructed around the same time.

The Mudigondesvara's *vimāna* is rendered as a cube, standing directly on a simplified tripartite basement, and without the aedicular projections that characterize the additive appearance of Tamil-Dravida style temples. Instead, the omitted hut-like aedicules are alluded to by pilasters that decoratively divide the unrecessed walls into three sections, as seen in previous examples of Tamil-Dravida style temples (Fig. 3.34). Other clear referents to the Tamil-Dravida style include the angular cornice (*kapōta*), which is ornamented by *kīrtimukha* (face of glory) dormer motifs and framed by two medium-relief *yāli* friezes; couchant bulls (*nandi*) at the cardinal points of the shikara; and sculptures of four deities set inside the niches (*devakōṣṭha*) of the central shrine. From south to north, these include Durga (who alone appears on the *ardhamanḍapa*), Bhikshatana, Vishnu, and Brahma (Figs. 3.35-3.38). The deities are sculpted awkwardly and in low relief—the crudeness of execution is seen especially in the animals adorning the lotus bases of Brahma and Durga: beneath the Goddess, a small and disproportionate bull's head represents the head of Mahisha (the buffalo demon), and on Brahma's base

Velur village (aka Rajadhiraja chaturvedimangalam) into an erivirapattinam (town in honor of vanquished heroes who fought in the service of the Ainnurruvar—see Chapter 2). In *Epigraphica Carnatica* 4, Chamarajagar 145 and 146, Institute of Kannada Studies: University of Mysore, 1975.

⁷⁰ *Epigraphia Carnatica* 4, Kollegal 106.

his goose mount is shown in an extremely linear profile. These representations clearly demonstrate the hand of a craftsman who was unskilled in executing sculptures like the volumetric Tamil region counterparts. Also notable is the unusual appearance of Durga on the southern side, as opposed to northern, and the presence of Shiva as Bhikshatana instead of the more conventional Dakshinamurti; whether these modifications represent changed religious practice or the local craftsmen's ignorance of standard Tamil-Dravida iconography remains debatable; as to my knowledge, this temple is unique to the locality in displaying figural representations of the gods.

In contrast to Tamil-Dravida style temples, the Mudigondesvara uses a different set of proportional conventions, especially visible in the elevated *kaṇṭha* and enlarged, trifaceted torus (*kumuda*). These conventions are similar to those used in the Racigudi, a mid-tenth century temple in Aihole, northern Karnataka (Fig. 3.39). While the Ainnurruvar did not explicitly patronize the Racigudi temple, it is not a stretch to relate this northern Karnataka monument to the Mudigondesvara. Numerous Ainnurruvar *praśastis* name the city of Aihole as its place of origin (see Chapter Two), and Sinha has suggested that the formal diversity of Aihole's tenth and eleventh century monuments might result from the patronage of the transregional organization's members.⁷¹ Like the Mudigondesvara, the Racigudi stands directly on a simplified tripartite plinth with an elevated *kaṇṭha* and has unrecessed walls; however, the ornamental pilasters on the walls do not allude to pavilions overhead, but frame niches containing ornamental models of pavilions. Ajay Sinha observes that many tenth century temples in Aihole "display an

⁷¹ "The diversity of Aihole may relate to the interregional culture of traveling merchants who must have patronized these temples. Aihole's expressive focus on the native Karnataka concept of shrine as a stark, stone cubicle reminiscent of caves may also reflect a conscious regionalism in this international context." Sinha, *Imagining Architects*, 75.

austere tendency” and “a restrained articulation of the sanctum wall;” these tendencies are further developed in Aihole’s eleventh century Nagara style monuments, possibly relating back to the “native Karnataka concept of shrine as a stark, stone cubicle reminiscent of caves” (i.e. Deccano-Dravida style).⁷² Taken as a whole, the Mudigondesvara temple reads as a Tamil-Dravida style monument, rendered within local Deccano-Dravida idiom. The confluence of style and idiom points to the complex cultural, political, and material pathways spanning the Deccan and Tamil regions. In this instance, Ainnurruvar patronage clearly played a crucial role in the temple’s formal conception.

Valikandapuram

The Tiruvalisvarar temple at Valikandapuram is located in Ariyalur (modern Perambalur district), north of Tiruchirappalli. It is inscribed with forty-two separate inscriptions describing donations by various individual merchants and merchant organizations, which attest that it was a major *nagaram* (commercial center) between the tenth and early eleventh centuries, with renewed importance in the thirteenth century. The Ainnurruvar were not the first merchants to have presented donations to the Tiruvalisvarar, and an organization known as the Sankarapaddiyar (oil merchants) appears in twenty-nine separate inscriptions dating as early as 922; many of these records attest that this group also managed the temple.⁷³ The Ainnurruvar were present at the temple by 965, when two different inscriptions record a local Ainnurruvar member and

⁷² Sinha, *Imagining Architects*, 60; 75.

⁷³ Thiagarajan, 110.

one from the more southern region of “Pandya nadu” donating lamps in commemoration of a deceased Valanjiyar member.⁷⁴ In the eleventh through twelfth centuries, there is a surprising dearth of inscriptions, the reason for which is unknown. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that by the early eleventh century, the Chola monarchs had expanded their territories northwards into the Ariyalur region, marked by Rajendra I in 1025 establishing his new capital in Gangaikondacholapuram, located thirty-six miles southeast of Valikandapuram. One would expect that just as at Mudigonda, the royal court’s expansion into this area would have heightened its status as a major commercial center—this in fact seems to have been the case, and as Thiagarajan records, eight new *nagarams* emerged in Ariyalur during this period.⁷⁵ That Gangaikondacholapuram itself was a major consumer of international goods at this time is demonstrated by caches of fine white *yingqing* porcelain from southern China’s Jingdezhen kilns that date from this period, which have been recovered from the recently excavated Chola palace site.⁷⁶ In fact, Valikandapuram seems to be anomalous in this regard, as many other donations by the Ainnurruvar dating from between the eleventh and twelfth centuries appear in no less than fourteen inscriptions from temples all over the region, showing that the Ainnurruvar were active at this time. A full inspection of all Ainnurruvar inscriptions from Ariyalur shows that the organization was continuously active from the ninth through fifteenth centuries.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 111.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁶ See Noboru Karashima and Y. Kanazawa’s essay, “Testimony of Chinese Ceramic Sherds,” in *AMCA*, 111.

⁷⁷ Thiagarajan, 139-142.

Nevertheless, an important inscription appears at the Tiruvalisvarar in 1207, after a century-long respite, which cites the Ainnurruvar's enduring influence over the temple. It is made on behalf of "The Eighteen" (a title which is synonymous with the Ainnurruvar), and claims that,

This koyil is our hereditary possession.⁷⁸ The padinenbhumi (The Eighteen) vaniya nagarattar met (fully, without deficiency) in the Tanmatavalan Tirukkkavan, ("Merchant dharma" open hall/verandah) of the Sri Kailasamudaiyar Nayanar koyil. In the king's 28th year, we decided to give the product of one oil press to the Tiruvalisvaramudaiyar Nayanar Koyil for Santi Vilakku. For one *chekku* (press) we shall get 100 *nalis* of sesame oil—for this, we will get two times the sum in ghee, totalling 200 *nalis*. For each *nali* there will be one lamp, and [daily] 27 lamps will be burned. For the annual festival, 175 will be burned for as long as the sun and moon shine. Additionally, instead of requiring the oil guild's laborers to perform compulsory labor, we the merchants will ourselves pay [the equivalent cash?] to the tax collectors. Moreover, soldiers should not enter the city and ask fees from this Curatalam/Virapattinam (town honoring Ainnurruvar warriors). The labor that the vanigar give to the local chief and that is collected from this *curatalam*, will be used to renovate and repair the temple's processional cart, which we shall oversee.

Thus agreed, one times, two times, and then three times, we engraved [this charter] on the holy stone wall of the temple. If anyone destroys/thinks badly of this decision, he will be excommunicated and branded as one among swine and dogs.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Bold is mine for added emphasis.

⁷⁹ *AMCA* 30, see Appendix 1 for full translation.

The Ainnuruvar, in identifying the temple as their “hereditary possession” demonstrate that they understood the Tiruvalisvarar to comprise part of their cultural heritage, and as a testament of their historical links to the community. Thus the funds invested in renovating the temple’s cart can be read as a statement about the organization’s continued support and investment in the local community. Indeed, the Ainnuruvar seem to have gained prominence within the city, as the inscription tells us that Valikandapuram had been turned into an “*erivirapattinam*,” to honor warriors who protected the Ainnuruvar. The members’ resolve to pay taxes on behalf of their oil workers also suggests that the Ainnuruvar had incorporated the city’s older merchant elite corporation, the sankarapaddiyar (oil merchants), into its fray, now making decisions for which the previous organization had been responsible.

There are no records concerning the temple’s construction or renovations, but the temple fabric itself shows several phases of construction, with two areas possessing distinctive stylistic attributes of the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The *vimāna*, the oldest portion of the temple, is currently completely enclosed by a large rectangular *prakara* (wall), which is covered by a stone ceiling that admits almost no light. On the basis of style, it is likely the *prakara*, which also surrounds several *maṇḍapas*, is a Nayaka period (sixteenth through seventeenth centuries) addition.

The *vimāna*’s construction is extremely simple. Its *adiṣṭhāna* consists of three enlarged components: a lotus base (*padma*), torus (*vr̥tta kumuda*), and *yāli* frieze (Fig. 3.40). Both the *ardhamāṇḍapa* and central shrine’s walls have identical unornamented pilasters, which on the central shrine frame three *devakōṣṭhas* containing sculptures from

a later period (Fig. 3.41). Stylistically, this portion of the building seems assignable to the mid-tenth century.

A hall comprised of numerous pillars bearing ornamental carvings surrounds the *vimāna*. Their forms, which consist of three cubical blocks connected by shafts chamfered to sixteen sides, are *citrakhaṇḍa* pillars, a distinctive feature of twelfth and thirteenth century temple complexes, and were probably installed in the Tiruvalisvarar around the thirteenth century (Fig. 3.42). An elaborate example of one such pillar appears immediately adjacent to the central shrine, where a *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar is attached to a high relief rider, who is seated astride a rearing lion (Fig. 3.43). The rider dramatically raises a sword in his right hand and in his left hand grasps his steed's bridle, while the rearing lion balances atop a smaller couchant lion. The blocks of the *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar are adorned with worshippers, identifiable as such through their distinctive posture of hands clasped over their heads in obeisance, and a seated representation of the elephant god, Ganesha. The first large scale, high relief images of warriors seated on rearing lion appear in the late twelfth century. They are exemplified by sculptures at the Somanatharsvami temple in Tanjavur district, which have been carved into the walls of the eastern *gōpura* (3.44). Both representations of the subject have lions with elongated torsos and round-faced riders, although the stylized ornamentation on the Tiruvalisvarar's version suggests that it was created at a slightly later date than the Somanatharsvami's.

Other *citrakhaṇḍa* pillars from the Tiruvalisvarar show a variety of figures from the epics and Brahmanic religious traditions, such as Hanuman worshipping a *linga*, who is distinguished as a monkey by his projected snout (Fig. 3.45), or a standing Rama and Sita, identifiable by Rama clasping his massive bow next to the smaller figure of Sita (Fig.

3.46). In another pillar, Durga is seated astride her lion mount (Fig. 3.47), while another shows the god Aiyanar, a god especially popular within the Tamil region, seated in a meditative pose with a crown of dreadlocks (3.48).

In addition to the *maṇḍapas* inside of the *prakara* enclosure, it seems likely that the temple's tank also was either constructed anew or renovated during the thirteenth century. Today, it is a beautiful and self-sufficient structure, approached by a flight of steps that leads to the square pool, where worshippers and priests perform ablutions before entering the temple (Fig. 3.49). It is framed on all sides by a covered ambulatory that contains a peristyle colonnade of *citrakhaṇḍa* pillars, stylistically similar to the ones in the interior (Fig. 3.50). A curved cornice (*kapōta*) appears on all four sides, sheltering the space from the hot sun.

Koyilpatti

Today, the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar (Shiva) temple in Koyilpatti village, Tiruchirappalli District, is dilapidated and seldom visited. Located on the border of Pudukkottai and Tiruchirappalli districts, Koyilpatti is located twenty-one miles northwest of Kodumbalur, a town famous for its early ninth century stone structural temples. Most of the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar's recorded inscriptions date between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the earliest being two inscriptions from the late twelfth century that record the sale of temple land and the remission of land tax.⁸⁰ Temples commonly were named after the current monarch, implying that the temple commemorates Rajaraja II (1146-1172) or Rajaraja III (1216-1246). A lengthy

⁸⁰ See *ARE* 287 and 288 of 1964-5.

inscription, dated 1305, states that several regional branches of the Ainnurruvar met at the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar to determine taxes on merchandise (*pattana pagudi*), to be contributed to the temple. Two other associations participated: the Chitrameli Periyanaḍu, primarily composed of farmers, and the Manigramam merchants of Kodumbalur. The inscription provides valuable information about specific merchandise, detailing the type and quantity of each item, including pepper, horses, camels, saris, yak's hair, sandalwood, camphor, cattle, woolen cloth, musk, paddy, conch, ivory, tamarind, and salt.⁸¹ The inscription indicates that Koyilpatti and Kodumbalur must have been important mercantile centers between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. While the Ainnurruvar do not appear in inscriptions from the area until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Manigramam were active from at least the eleventh century, shown by several inscriptions explicitly linking the Manigramam to Kodumbalur.”⁸² Like the Ainnurruvar, the Manigramam engaged in overseas trade, demonstrated by inscriptions mentioning the Manigramam found in Takuapa, Thailand.⁸³

Aligned on an east-west axis, the temple is approached through a reconstructed *prakara* and makeshift gateway, indicated by two monolithic doorjambs (Fig. 3.51). Two stone *nandis*, carved in the round, probably once adorning the original superstructures, have been placed on either side of the gate (Fig. 3.52). The Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar's god and goddess shrines were clearly constructed at the same time. The two shrines

⁸¹ See my translation of the inscription in Appendix 1, number 38.

⁸² They are referred to as “the Manigramam of Kodumbalur” in inscriptions dating between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. See *SII* 4, no. 147; *ARE* 283 and 288 of 1964-5; *SII* 8, 442.

⁸³ AMCA, 11. This 9th century Tamil language inscription records the construction of a temple tank, which was placed under the protection of the Manigramam.

share a common *maṇḍapa*, with the goddess shrine extending to the north, giving the impression of an “L-shape” from the exterior (Fig. 3.53). The goddess shrine’s height and width is nearly equal to that of the main Shiva shrine, and its architectural features are identical. The parity between god and goddess shrines probably reflects the goddess’s increasingly elevated status, from the late thirteenth century onwards.

Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries especially, patrons erected more shrines to Amman than to Shiva, possibly indicating an increasingly fractured, caste oriented socioeconomic climate.⁸⁴ Temples built before this time without goddess shrines usually added a separate shrine on the complex or an adjoining shrine to the lateral side of the main temple. The parity between the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar’s god and goddess shrines suggests a construction date in the late twelfth century.

Although the exterior has been heavily whitewashed, the articulation of walls and sculptural friezes is still visible. The superstructures are later additions. Both shrines have a simple *adiṣṭhāna*, the bottom of which is buried, with a partially exposed rectangular *jagatī*, *tripaṭṭa kumuda* (trapezoidal torus), *kaṇṭha* containing sculptural friezes, and rectangular *paṭṭika* (Fig. 3.54). The frieze contains iconic figures of Vaishnavite and Shaivite deities, such as Ganesha and Narasimha as well as *puranas* depicting Tamil saints. For example in one of the panels Karaikkal Ammaiyar stands on her hands beside a slew of devoted followers (Fig. 3.55). The female saint, who had previously been married to a merchant, renounced her comfortable life to devote herself

⁸⁴ Burton Stein proposes newly established goddess shrines reflected the interests of locally dominant Tamil landed groups. Ancient female tutelaries (goddesses) “were linked to established locality and regional Siva shrines, [where] the principle of segmentation of land controllers was that of subcaste membership.” In “Temples in Tamil Country, 1300-1750 A.D,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 14, No. 1, (1976), 44.

to Shiva. The scene depicts Karaikkal Ammaiyar on her pilgrimage to Shiva's abode on Mount Kailasha. In the final part of her journey, she demonstrates complete bodily devotion to her lord by rolling on her head rather than walking.⁸⁵ It became popular during this period to include friezes depicting the lives of Tamil saints. For example, the twelfth century Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram mentioned earlier has a band of friezes around the entire *vimāna* narrating the entire *Periyapurāṇam*, including an image of Karaikkal Ammaiyar rolling on her head to Mount Kailasha (Fig. 3.56).⁸⁶

The Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar's walls are relatively plain, the *ardhamaṇḍapa* broken only by pilasters instead of niches. Three blind niches surround the central sanctum, each topped by an undecorated, half moon *tōraṇa*. The extant cornice (*kapōta*) has lion faced arches (*kīrtimukha*) with a continuous *vyāla* frieze above, and gamboling dwarfs (*bhuta gāna*) underneath. The temple's sculptural austerity does not connect with Kodumbalur's richly ornamented ninth century commissions (Fig. 3.57). It seems that these artisans relocated before the Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar's construction. Why this occurred remains unanswered, though it seems strange that the thriving mercantile population, presumably with ample funds for commissions, did not preserve these traditions. Still, there are some lingering traces of the microregional style. The Rajacholisvaramudaiyar's "intimate scale" and "smooth windowless surfaces punctuated

⁸⁵ Images of Karaikkal Ammaiyar also became popular in Cambodia, illustrating the religious and mercantile connections between the two countries. See Mireille Bénisti, "Notes d'iconographie khmère," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 53, no. 52-3, (1967), pp. 513-16.

⁸⁶ For a detailed list of the episodes see J. V. Marr, "The 'Periya Puranam' Frieze at Taracuram: Episodes in the Lives of the Tamil Saiva Saints," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 42, no. 2 (1979), 268-89.

only by planar offsets and slender pilasters at regular intervals” conform to defining characteristics of previous monuments from the region.⁸⁷

Later Chola Temples

This chapter so far has argued that the Dravida style was widespread across south India and the artistic style of choice for south Indian patrons. It has examined five temples that were important centers for the Ainnurruvar merchant organization and wherever possible has proposed the presence of workshops responsible for multiple temples. In this final section, I will outline briefly some of the fundamental components of temples constructed in the later Chola period (1070-1281) in order to prepare the reader for encountering the Shiva temple in Quanzhou in the next chapter. As we shall see, the stylistic affinities are quite close, which proves that south Indian merchants and artisans migrated to southern China by at least the thirteenth century.

The Rajacholisvaramudaiyar temple at Koyilpatti, examined above, exhibits several distinctive features of a later Chola period temple. One aspect is the changed iconography seen in the representation of the Tamil saints. As we recall, the saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar appears in the recessed bands of low relief sculpture along the basement (Fig. 3.55).⁸⁸ The depiction of saints in stone begins in earnest only after the twelfth century. Before this time, narratives of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were generally displayed in this location. In the later Chola period, representations of the Shaivite saints increased dramatically, and it was in this period that the *Periyapurānam*,

⁸⁷ Kaimal, “A Man’s World,” 31.

⁸⁸ David Sanford, *Early Temples Bearing Ramayana Relief Cycles in the Chola area: A Comparative Study*, (Unpublished Dissertation, University of California, 1974).

an official biography of the lives of the saints, was penned at court by Sekkizhar, the Chola king Kulottunga II's (1135-45) minister. We know that the impact of the saints was great enough for images of them to be displayed in the Shiva temple in China: we have already seen a panel from this temple bearing a representation of the Kochchenganan episode from the *Periyapurānam* (Fig. 0.3). There is another low relief panel from Quanzhou that depicts the saint Tirumular, which we shall examine in the next chapter (Fig. 4.32). Clearly the representation of the saints was crucial for temples constructed in this time. One possible reason for the saints' popularity might be the emphasis on their frequently violent and imperfect human nature. The *Periyapurānam* includes stories about patricide, war against the innocent, and extreme disregard for Hindu laws of ritual purity. In fact, Anne Monius has observed that it documents the events in the lives of the saints with such explicit details of grisly violence that it "has been a source of controversy and discomfort for Tamil speaking Saivas – no less scholars of South Indian religious and literary history – for much of the past nine hundred years."⁸⁹ One wonders if there is some relationship between the increased popularity of the saints, who were defined by their independent relationships to the gods and imperfect human nature, and the rising power of independent lords, unaffiliated with royal households, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (as described in Chapter Two). The stories of the saints might have provided inspiration to independent associations of merchants to strike out along uncharted paths.

Another characteristic of later Chola period temples is the increased number of buildings and expanded area of the temple grounds. Again, in the

⁸⁹ Anne Monius, "Love, Violence, and the Aesthetics of Disgust: Saivas and Jains in Medieval South India," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 32, nos. 2-3, (June 2004), 115.

Rajarajacholisvramudaiyar temple at Koyilpatti we find another example of this new trend in the presence of a goddess temple (*Tirukamakottam*). In the later Chola period, building separate shrines for the consort of the god that were slightly smaller than the main god's became commonplace. As mentioned above, the growing celebration of the goddess might be attributed to the increasingly fractured socio-economic climate, in which independent castes (like merchants) became more powerful. As Vidya Dehejia has noted, the later Chola period was synonymous with architectural expansion, with some temples enlarged in area up to six times their previous size. Dehejia notes that another one of the reasons for the growth of temple size and profusion of subsidiary buildings was a "change in the visualization of the deity enshrined in the temple, and an accompanying growth of temple rituals."⁹⁰ Whereas previously the god had been viewed as being more passive and secluded, he now took on a more active role in public affairs. It now became commonplace to take bronze images of the god out for public processions and festivals. During religious processions, images of the gods were carried throughout the town in elaborate wooden chariots.⁹¹ This practice continues into the current day, as evidenced by a modern example of a wooden chariot from Tiruppurumbiyam in Tanjavur District, currently kept near the city's main Shiva temple (Fig. 3.58).

The leap in the number of temple rituals involving public processions of the gods likely accounts for one of the most distinctive aspects of later chola period temples, which is that the main shrine was now adorned with wheels and rearing horses so as to give the impression of a festival chariot. One of the first examples of this can be found in

⁹⁰ Dehejia, *Art of the Imperial Cholas*, 104.

⁹¹ See Richard H. Davis, "Chola Bronzes in Procession," in Vidya Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002, 47-63.

the Amritagatesvarar temple at Melakkadambur, which is approximately twenty miles from Chidambaram. Most likely constructed around 1113 during the reign of Kulottunga Chola I, this is the earliest known temple to have simulated a chariot in architecture. The main shrine is adorned with four stone wheels and two rearing horses, giving the impression that the entire temple is being pulled in ritual procession (Figs. 3.59 and 3.60). In other slightly later twelfth century temples, the rearing horses and wheels were moved from the sides of the shrine to its front porch. This is observed at the c. 1150 Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram (Fig. 3.2), the c. 1212 Kampaharesvarar temple at Tribhuvanam, and at the twelfth century Somanathesvarar temple at Pazhaiyarai (Fig. 3.61), to name only a few examples. Clearly this changed feature in stone mirrored the changing rituals of the time.

Later Chola temples are also notable for their exuberant sculpture and ornament. Areas that were once relatively plain are now covered with bas-reliefs and ornamental motifs. The *adhiṣṭhāna* at the Tribhuvanam Kampaharesvarar temple illustrates the astonishing degree of sculptural detail (Fig. 3.62). The entirety of the basement is covered with bas-relief panels depicting dancing girls, acrobats, and other genre scenes, and surmounted by a sculptural frieze of yalis, smaller bas reliefs containing more genre scenes and images of the saints, and yet another yali frieze.⁹² The pillars that support the *maṇḍapa* also receive heightened sculptural attention. They are now carved in the *Citrakhaṇḍa* format, in which octagonal shafts connect three cubical blocks with sculpted surfaces (Figs. 3.42 and 3.43). These pillars were used in the construction of additional buildings to create the expanded temple complex, and thus are highly visible in many

⁹² H. Sarkar, *The Kampaharesvara Temple at Tribhuvanam*, (Madras: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu, 1974).

temples. Thus, the pillars' style can frequently be used as a rough estimate of a structure's date. We have already seen such examples at the Tiruvalisvarar temple of Valikandapuram, where *Citrakhaṇḍa* pillars were installed in the thirteenth century around a tenth century shrine. Their exuberant decoration is alive with creative inspiration. Stories of the saints, epics, flora, fauna, and intriguing genre scenes now reinvigorated the dark halls of the temple. Some of the most stunning examples of these ornately carved pillars are located in the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram (Fig. 3.63). In a small *maṇḍapa* located to the north of the main Shiva shrine (now used as a sculpture gallery for loose images), we find an example of this exuberance in a single pillar (Fig. 3.64). At the top, lord Shiva dances within an ornamental swirl with one leg raised high and accompanied by a dancing, drum-playing dwarf. Immediately underneath, the nearly skeletal saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar is seated with her hands folded in prayer, worshipping her god in ecstatic bliss. Both sculpted surfaces teem with activity, no space left unadorned. Rolling waves surround the central scenes of Shiva and Karaikkal Ammaiyar, billowing out to the edges of the stone surface. This is but one of the many sculptural pillars in the same hall, which, when taken together, give an overwhelming impression of movement and grace.

The above study of five Ainnurruvar temples displays the Ainnurruvar's historical longevity and command of significant material resources. The new material evidence requires that scholars redefine past paradigms for evaluating medieval south Indian architecture and give merchant organizations their rightful place.

Inscriptional evidence displays the Ainnurruvar's frequent collaborations with other mercantile organizations and village sub-groups. These partnerships attest that the Ainnurruvar were embedded within local communities, refuting past interpretations of the organization as solely specialized in long-distance trade. Moreover, these partnerships illustrate the difficulty of classifying the Ainnurruvar and its constituents because partnerships vary drastically according to time and locale. Analysis of individual temples implies the existence of tightly networked activity centers, and of agents who moved fluidly between regional borders. The Dravida style typifies the entire corpus of architecture just discussed; however, idiom is markedly different. As I have shown through comparative examples, it is possible to establish the presence of workshops that worked inter-regionally (e.g. the Manavalesvara of Tiruvelvikkudi and the Vatamulesvara of Kizhapalur), or who were employed by a variety of patrons (e.g. the Tiruvalisvarar at Tirunelveli and the Devasvamyudaiyar at Cheranmadevi).

On the whole, local idioms, represented in the forms of individual temples, are gradations of the larger Tamil-Dravida style. I suggest that this stylistic uniformity represents a conscious effort to create a regional identity through architecture, a contention that is substantiated by numerous inscriptions that mention Tamil-Dravida vocabulary as defining elements of the temple structure. As case in point, the Mudigondesvara in Mysore district articulates the importance of the Tamil-Dravida style, its form representing the intersection of Deccano-Dravida and Tamil-Dravida styles: this stylistic translation might be explained by extrapolating the presence of Ainnurruvar patrons, who directed local artisans trained in Deccano-Dravida style to build a monument largely reliant on Tamil-Dravida precedents.

After analyzing the larger phenomena of Dravida temple style within the Tamil region, I suggest that we might read the Ainnurruvar's deployment of the Tamil-Dravida style as a visual message to larger audiences about the merchant organization's regional affiliations. Over long distances and times, the Tamil region's temple architecture painstakingly reproduces Tamil-Dravida style in both textual and built format. In other words, the temple's built form, including scale, architectural vocabulary, medium, etc. operated as sign systems articulating specific conceptions of power and identity. Replicating architectural form enabled Tamil merchants to transport culturally encoded systems with them. In the next chapter we will see this theory articulated in stone in the city of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, in thirteenth century China.

CHAPTER 4: A SHIVA TEMPLE IN MEDIEVAL SOUTHERN CHINA

By the late thirteenth century, Tamil merchants were crucial actors in the world-system, not only within south India, but also throughout the Indian Ocean maritime circuit. These merchants transported spices, textiles, semi-precious stones, unguents, and other commercial goods by boat through complex networks along the route connecting India to China, and established several permanent trade diaspora communities in Southeast Asia and China. This chapter investigates their easternmost settlement in Quanzhou, a coastal city in Fujian province, attested to by over three hundred stone architectural carvings discovered there, including a Tamil-Chinese inscription,¹ documenting that a Tamil-speaking community built a temple in Quanzhou devoted to the Hindu god Shiva in 1281.² Many of the architectural carvings are so strikingly Tamil-Dravida in style, the architectural mode associated with the premodern Tamil region, that in 1933 the noted art historian of India, Ananda Coomaraswamy, declared “the Chinese work so closely reproduces Indian ... formulae and style as to give the impression of Indian workmanship, at first sight.”³ At first glance puzzling, closer

¹ This number is approximate as Quanzhou citizens continue to identify new carvings. The Quanzhou Maritime Museum regularly acquires these pieces.

² Several authors have written on the Indic carvings, including: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton," *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 9 (1933), 5-11; T. N. Subramaniam, "A Tamil Colony in Medieval India," in *South Indian Studies*, ed. R. Nagaswamy (Madras: 1978), 1-52; John Guy, "Tamil Merchant Guilds and the Quanzhou Trade," in *The Emporium of the World : Maritime Quanzhou, 1000-1400*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2000), 283-308; John Guy, "The Lost Temples of Nagapattinam and Quanzhou: A Study in Sino-Indian Relations," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 3 (1993/1994), 291-310; Har Prasad Ray, "Indian Settlements in Medieval China: A Preliminary Study," *Indian Journal of Asian Studies* 1, vol. 1, (1989): 68-82.

³ Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton," 5.

analysis of the remains prove that a thriving community of South Indian merchants once lived in Quanzhou, and were part of the vast Indian Ocean circulatory sphere.

Until now, the events surrounding the temple's creation and destruction have remained unclear. In this chapter, I propose a chronology of the temple's history, arguing that Ming troops destroyed the temple during a wave of anti-foreign aggression in the mid-fourteenth century, barely a century after it was built. This occurred during the transition from the Yuan (1271-1368) to the Ming (1368-1644) dynasty, when the rulership of China passed from the Mongols to a more xenophobic native regime. While no known texts record these events, I read the carvings' find sites and formal appearance to narrate this proposed history. Today, the carvings are scattered throughout the region—piled in local museums, incorporated into local architecture, and even worshipped as Buddhist icons. They provide the evidence for documenting the Tamil community's existence in Quanzhou.

In previous chapters, I have studied the Tamil merchant and his cultural and artistic production within southern India. Here, I analyze that figure within the social and political milieu of premodern Quanzhou. Though I stress cultural fluidity in my reading of the Shiva temple form, the historical background section makes clear that for Indians living in China, their foreignness was probably a defining characteristic.⁴ Indians comprised part of Quanzhou's large, non-ethnic Chinese population, which included Arabs, Persians, Mongols, Southeast Asians, Syrians, Armenians, Italians, and others, all

⁴ The regional vocabulary for “foreigner” (e.g. *fan*; *xiyu ren*), most certainly had multivalent meanings according to usage and context, and deserves further consideration. In her dissertation, Irene Leung has examined such topics within the context of Song Dynasty *fan*zu painting, showing that it evinces complex understandings of non-Chinese. Irene S. Leung, “The Frontier Imaginary in the Song Dynasty (960-1279): Revisiting Cai Yan's “Barbarian Captivity” and Return” (Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 2001).

of whom settled in the city, then one of the world's largest trading emporiums. Many Chinese records refer to foreigners living in China between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, often with extreme ambivalence. At times, Chinese policies privileged foreign involvement with the local economy, but at others, texts record backlashes against, and even mass extermination of, foreign populations. Ambivalence towards foreign populations might be placed within a wider context of general attitudes towards cultural difference prevailing in the premodern world. Observing similar attitudes towards Hadrami (persons who identify the Hadramawt region in Yemen as their homeland) populations in the premodern Indian Ocean, Engseng Ho "suspects that such ambivalence, a dose of cultural schizophrenia perhaps, may be common to societies that have long engaged with the outside world, whether on their own terms or not."⁵

While acknowledging that constructions of foreign identity are dependent upon historical context, and while being aware of premodern China's demonstrated historical consciousness of India, a common thread in references to foreign merchants in Quanzhou is the indifference towards documenting cultural, religious, and political specificities, resulting in a generic category of "foreigner." The scattered references to "Hindu" temples term them "foreign Buddhist temples" (*fanfo si* 蕃佛寺), implying a lack of precise nomenclature for Indic religions. Premodern Chinese historians produced polarized representations of foreigners, depicting them either as society's saviors or as its destroyers. Intriguingly, records from early Buddhist monuments in India evince similar

⁵ Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, xxi.

attitudes: there, the term “*yavana*” evidently functioned as an inclusive term to describe all foreigners, some of whom adopted Indic names and settled there.⁶

Foreign merchants contributed to the creation of these binaries as well—Jennifer Purtle has argued that in Yuan period Fujian, “visual production was a medium through which expatriate populations articulated their ethnic and/or geocultural identities, and subverted normative Chinese urban visual life.”⁷ In this light, we must consider whether a foreign identity affected artistic form. For, as Purtle observes, many examples of Quanzhou’s visual culture rely upon non-Chinese homeland iconography and language, which might indicate the active assertion of cultural difference. Certainly, the Shiva temple’s artistic style demonstrates a conscious reference to, and perhaps identification with, south Indian artistic culture.

PART 1: SINO-INDIC EXCHANGE IN PREMODERN SOURCES

Foreigners in Premodern Southern China

China and India were linked by exchanges of people, material objects, and ideas that took place over many centuries.⁸ Trade routes connected the two countries as early as the end of the first century CE, when Ban Gu compiled the *Han Shu* (*History of the*

⁶ I thank Vidya Dehejia for this insight. *Yavana* first denoted Greek traders, but later becomes a generic term for foreigner. See Barbara Stoler Miller, Joint Committee on South Asia., and Indo-US Subcommission on Education and Culture., *The Powers of Art : Patronage in Indian Culture* (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁷ Jennifer Gillian Purtle, “The Production of Painting, Place, and Identity in Song-Yuan (960-1368) Fujian,” (Unpublished dissertation, Yale, 2001).

⁸ See Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, Ad 1-600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400*, Asian Interactions and Comparisons (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Gungwu Wang, *The Nanhai Trade : The Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1998).

Han Dynasty 漢書), a richly informative document about the southern Hindukush region. Buddhism, in particular, which is said to have reached China by the second century, provided a major impetus for travelers to move between the two places. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the first reference to Indians living in southern China appears in an early sixth century Buddhist work, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, which documents how an Indian seafaring merchant named Zhu Pole 竺婆勒, who lived near the Guangzhou port, fathered a son who later became a Buddhist monk.⁹ The next reference comes in 750, and contains one of the few references to Hindus in China. The Chinese monk, Jianzhen, reported seeing three Brahmanical temples and several Brahman priests in Guangzhou (approximately 450 miles southwest of Quanzhou), also noting that “foreign merchants were to embark on a trading mission to India from the Chinese port.”¹⁰

Perhaps because it was one of the only ports where merchants could trade foreign goods legally and in high volume,¹¹ Guangzhou dwarfed Quanzhou as southern China’s primary port until around the mid-eleventh century.¹² During this time, Quanzhou trade experienced minimal growth.¹³ As early as the ninth century, foreign merchandise had

⁹ Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade*, 163.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Yangzhou, Hangzhou, and Mingzhou were also important ports.

¹² The Arab geographer, Ibn Khordadbeh (ca. 850-911) provides eyewitness testimony, recording in *Treatise of Roads and Provinces* (*Kitab al-masalik wa'l-mamalik*) that Guangzhou was an important seaport for foreign trade. Quoted in Billy K. L. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China : The South Fukien Pattern, 946-1368*, Harvard East Asian Monographs ; 195 (Cambridge, Mass.: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center : distributed by Harvard University Press, 2000). 17.

¹³ Some argue that Quanzhou emerged as a primary seaport for overseas trade as early as the mid-ninth century, but scholarly consensus is that Guangzhou drew most maritime traffic until 1087. See Hugh R. Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks : Southern Fujian Province from the Third to the Thirteenth*,

become essential to the Quanzhou market, so much so that the local municipality implemented policies to prevent excessive taxation of foreigners and implored local populations to trade fairly with them. A decree from 834 CE states:

The foreign ships from the South Seas come from distant countries, expecting merciful treatment from our kingdom. The foreigners should of course be treated with kindness so as to excite their gratitude. We hear, on the contrary, that of late local officers are apt to overtax them, and the voice of resentment is said to have reached the foreign countries . . . We deeply regret that these foreigners should feel so uneasy, and we even feel that the present mode of taxation is too heavy for them. We should show them lenience, so as to invite the goodwill of these peoples. To the foreigners living at Ling-nan, Fu-chien, and Yang-chou, the military and civil governors of these provinces should offer consolation, and except for the already fixed anchorage duties, the court-purchase, and the regular presents, no additional taxes should be inflicted on them, and they should be allowed to engage freely in their trade.¹⁴

By using an overtly apologetic tone to describe and banish discriminatory trading practices, this remarkable decree appeals to local and international audiences, suggesting that its authors expected the good news of reformed policy to travel to foreign countries. It thus demonstrates cognizance of circuits connecting China to foreign lands, and additionally proves the existence of non-Chinese living in southern China by 834 CE. The Chinese dependence on foreigners might have resulted from continually changing

Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Tung Kao, *Zhuan Tang wen* 75: 2b-3a. Quoted in Billy So, *Prosperity*, 18.

policies on international trade. The central government sometimes prevented Chinese merchants from sailing abroad, making foreign traders the exclusive importers of valued goods.¹⁵

By the mid-eleventh century, many foreign merchants had assimilated into the larger Guangzhou community and belonged to prominent families. Interestingly, though some foreign merchants might have belonged to families living in China for as long as two centuries, in official parlance they were categorically foreign, despite their high status. For instance, a document records that many “foreign merchants” came from “powerful Guangzhou families.”¹⁶ At the same time, there were periodic uprisings against the Guangzhou foreign population—Abu Zayd, the narrator of the ca. 851 travelogue, *Akbar al-Sin wa'l- Hind* (An Account of India and China), states that in 878 Chinese forces “massacred foreign merchants, including thousands of Muslims and Jews.”¹⁷

By all accounts, it is clear that many foreign merchants populated premodern southern China from at least the eighth century onwards. Although the Song government established Quanzhou’s first official maritime superintendence in 1087, Quanzhou received increasing amounts of illegal traffic from the mid-tenth century onwards.¹⁸

Perhaps not coincidentally, the first reference to Indians living in Quanzhou dates from

¹⁵ The central government’s policies on foreign trade were highly erratic. They outlawed Chinese merchants from going abroad in 985 (Song period), but at other times, when Chinese were permitted to travel internationally, they banned foreigners from trading on Chinese ships to decrease competition. Richard Pearson, Li Min, and Li Guo, “Quanzhou Archaeology: A Brief Review,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (March 2002), 28.

¹⁶ Billy So, *Prosperity*, 37.

¹⁷ Sen, *Buddhism*, 166.

¹⁸ Richard Pearson and Billy So have attributed this development to advances in agricultural technology, which generated a surge in commercial expansion. Pearson, “Quanzhou Archaeology,” 31.

this period: in 985 CE. Zhao Rugua records in *Description of Barbarian Peoples* (*Zhu fan zhi* 諸蕃志) of ca. 1225, that an Indian monk arrived by sea in 985 and procured donations from foreign merchants, which he used to build a Buddhist temple in the southern part of the city. Moreover, the record implies that by the time of the monk's arrival, there was an established Indian presence in Quanzhou.

It seems likely that the arrival of Indian merchants predated the Chola monarchy's political involvement with China, based on the dearth of references to official Indian envoys in China prior to the eleventh century.¹⁹ It was only in 1015 CE that Rajendra I sent an official envoy to the Song court, an action that immediately preceded the Cholas waging war upon the Srivijayan kingdom. Located in the Straits of Malacca with its capital in Palembang, Sumatra, Srivijaya controlled the bulk of trade between the Indian Ocean and the South Seas until 1025, at which time Rajendra I defeated his rivals and wrested control of the lucrative sea route (Map 21).²⁰

Srivijayans remained in Quanzhou until as late as the twelfth century, and historical references to them provide additional information about the construction of foreign identity. One interesting account, which is found in the mid-twelfth century biography of a Quanzhou official, attests that foreign civilians participated in voluntary self-segregation. The official writes that:

¹⁹ Other studies have shown that thirteenth century Italian merchants traded in China independent of Italian central governments, a fact which underscores the merchants' potential to act as autonomous agents. This is also attributable to the Mongols' active efforts to negotiate trading partnerships with foreign merchants. Nicola Di Cosmo, "Black Sea Emporia and the Mongol Empire: A Reassessment of the Pax Mongolica," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53(2010).

²⁰ Srivijaya appears to have overshadowed India in the Chinese markets until 1025. A pre-1015 record relates that a Srivijayan envoy convinced Chinese officials that the Chola kingdom, at the height of its power, was a vassal state of Srivijaya. Sen, *Buddhism*, 224.

Among the scores of countries that have trade connections with Quanzhou is Srivijaya. There are scores of rich merchants from Srivijaya who are living or were born in Quanzhou. Among them is a man called Shi Nowei. Shi is famous for his generosity among his fellow foreign residents in Quanzhou. The building of a cemetery is but one of his many generous deeds. This cemetery project was first proposed by another foreigner named Pu Xiaxin [who did not see it through]. . . . The location of this cemetery is on the hillside at the east of the city. . . All foreign merchants who die in Quanzhou are to be buried there. Construction started in 1162 and was finished a year later. Such a benevolent deed releases all foreigners in this land from worry [concerning their own graves after death] and enables the dead to be free of regrets. Such kindness will certainly promote overseas trade and encourage foreigners to come.²¹

The account casts the funereal segregation in a positive light, as the official believes that a separate graveyard will inspire good faith in the multicultural inhabitants' home countries. The passage also underscores the salience of foreign identity as an individual's defining characteristic, since it specifies that "foreigner" can denote even those who were born in Quanzhou.

This distinction is demonstrated in Quanzhou's material culture as well. The Quanzhou Maritime Museum possesses over one hundred Islamic gravestones inscribed with passages from the Quran and dating from between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, which frequently specify the tomb's occupant as foreign.²² One gravestone (ca. tenth or

²¹ Zhao Rugua recounts this event in the *Zhu fan zhi*, but he mislabels Shi Nowei as an Arab merchant from Siraf instead of a Srivijayan. Quoted in So, *Prosperity*, 53-4. Archaeological excavations outside Quanzhou's east city gate uncovered over twenty Islamic tombstones and a dozen stone tombs, further substantiating the account. Pearson et al., *Quanzhou Archaeology*, 35.

²² Tombstones contain a range of Islamic elements, including calligraphic styles and scripts exported throughout the Muslim world (e.g. Arabic language in Kufic script), Sufi poetry, and Koranic verse. For the

eleventh century) is inscribed with Chinese characters that read, “tomb of the foreigner,” (*Fanke mu* 蕃客墓) (Fig. 4.1). Immediately underneath, the name of the deceased is recorded in Arabic script. Both scripts are written in large, clear letters, suggesting that it was intended for two linguistic audiences. Another gravestone indexes the resilience of foreign identity, even though its occupant was enmeshed in Quanzhou society. The “Gravestone of Ahmad” is inscribed in Persian, Arabic and Chinese, and describes that the elder Ahmad “married a woman from Quanzhou and that the younger generation became proficient in Chinese,”²³ thus maintaining the distinction between foreign and local by emphasizing linguistic differences.

This same categorizing tendency reappears in an early thirteenth century geographical work, *Wonderful Landscapes of China* (*Fangyu shenglan* 方輿勝覽), which states, “there are two types of foreigners. One is white and the other black. All live in Quanzhou. The place where they are living has been called *fanzhen xiang* (foreigner’s lane).”²⁴ Once again, the simplistic distinction between black and white foreigners enunciates a conception of foreignness that did not consider the complex distinctions within a large variety of ethnic or religious identities. Rather, it is simply non-ethnic Chinese who are labeled as foreign.

full translation of this inscription and other Arabic language texts found in Quanzhou, see Dasheng Chen’s *Corpus d’inscriptions Arabes et Persanes en Chine*, Bibliothèque D’études Islamiques, (Paris: Libr. orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1991).

²³ Pearson et al., *Quanzhou Archaeology*, 41. There are also twenty-eight gravestones that record five generations of a family from Sri Lanka with the surname “Shi,” gravestones from the Ming and Qing dynasties. There are mentions of the Sri Lankan family in genealogies, and a land contract from Quanzhou. See Wenliang and Youxiong Wu’s, *Quanzhou Zong Jiao Shi Ke*, Beijing: Ke xue chu ban she, 2005, 506-519.

²⁴ So, *Prosperity*, 55.

The Quanzhou prefecture demonized foreigners at the end of the twelfth century, blaming them for the maritime economy's decline, causing merchants to go bankrupt and migrate to Guangzhou.²⁵ The Quanzhou officials' anger towards foreigners might have been caused by the contemporaneous money drainage. Several scholars have argued that foreigners exported large amounts of copper coinage in order to resell it in other countries for a higher price. A contemporary account records, "foreign merchants from Sanfoqi [Srivijaya] bring raw copper. . . and seek to have vessels of it made in Quanzhou, they take them back to their home countries in order to decorate their temples."²⁶ This statement resonates with religious practices in south India, which still to this day require large amounts of copper to cast bronze images of deities for ritual use and huge vessels for cooking food. Metal production in premodern Tamil Nadu was world-renowned for its quality, as shown in letters sent to and from Tamil Nadu by Jewish traders between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Written in Hebrew and Aramaic, these letters record how traders in Aden shipped copper "to south India for refashioning into new items to be sent back for sale in western markets."²⁷

Policies towards foreigners changed dramatically under the rule of Ghengis Khan, a member of a nomadic tribe of ethnic Mongols foreign to China, who initiated the period of Mongol rule (1271-1368). After uniting Mongolia in 1206, Ghengis Khan extended his empire, which came to include large parts of Asia, the Middle East, and some of

²⁵ An edict announcing the appointment of a prefect in 1261 cites "the presence of foreigners, the existence of powerful local families, the exhaustion of the prefectural treasury, and the corruption of local officials," as the four problems Quanzhou faced. So, *Prosperity*, 89.

²⁶ Angela Schottenhamer, "The Role of Metals," in *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000-1400*, Sinica Leidensia, Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000, 106.

²⁷ Thanks to Vidya Dehejia for this observation. See S. D. Goiten, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 194-5.

Europe.²⁸ While Ghengis Khan did not live to see his conquest of China completed, after his death in 1259 Qubilai Khan (r.1260-1294) continued his grandfather's war against the Song dynasty until 1279, when he took the last Song outpost in Guangzhou in southern China. Ultimately, it was the foreign community in Quanzhou that played a pivotal role in the Mongols' political takeover. One of these foreign traders, Pu Shougeng, stands out in his work to secure the Mongol takeover of the southern region, the last outpost of Song power. In 1276, Song loyalists launched a resistance against Mongols, who were occupying Fuzhou (near Quanzhou). The *Yuan shi* 元史 (the Yuan dynasty official history) records that Pu Shougeng, with the support of the local elite, "abandoned the Sung cause and rejected the emperor . . . by the end of the year, Quanzhou had formally submitted to the Mongols."²⁹ In abandoning the Song cause, Pu Shougeng mobilized troops mostly from the community of foreign residents and local elite, who massacred Song clansmen and loyalists. Pu Shougeng and his troops acted without the help of the Mongol army.

Pu Shougeng's support of Mongol conquest is not surprising, for the Mongols, themselves foreign to China, favored foreigners for prestigious positions in their bureaucracy. Nicola Di Cosmo provides an evocative reading of the Mongols' historical relationship with foreign merchants, arguing that because the Mongols were nomadic, partnerships with foreign merchants were essential to ensuring the empire's stability.

²⁸ Di Cosmo states that although the Mongols were divided into four khanates that sometimes sparred with one another, the political situation across lands separately ruled by Mongols were "more or less stable" and "allowed the flow of goods and people across continental Eurasia." "Black Sea Emporia," 91.

²⁹ The Mongols also gained control of Fuzhou and Guangzhou, two vital ports. The merchant, Pu Shougeng, is believed to have been of either Arabic or Persian background. His great grandfather traded in the South Seas and gained great success. The successive generations then moved first to Guangzhou, then to Quanzhou. So, *Prosperity*, 108.

Thus, “the political background of the Mongols amply explains the facility with which a common ground could be found between rulers and merchants of any religion or language.”³⁰ The Mongol fascination with Indian Buddhism can be seen through the missions of a Mongol official, Yigmish, who visited south India and Sri Lanka on multiple occasions in the late thirteenth century in order to conduct religious ceremonies on behalf of the Mongol ruler.³¹ Khubilai Khan also continued to hire individuals to translate Buddhist text from the Indian languages to Chinese.

The privileging of foreignness must have made Quanzhou a particularly attractive locale for the Tamil merchants. Until the Yuan Dynasty’s fall, Quanzhou’s foreigners, or *semu ren* (literally, “people with colored eyes”), occupied most of the local government’s official positions. Moreover, several genealogies and histories show that many locals adopted foreign Chinese names and converted to foreign religions, hoping to enjoy the privileges reserved for members of registered foreign households. Pu Shougeng himself was lavishly rewarded by the Mongols, and appointed military commissioner for the provinces of Fujian and Guandong. In 1278, Pu and the Mongol general, Sogetu, were given official positions in the Quanzhou government to promote maritime trade.³²

The Yuan period is also marked by increased Chinese mercantile activity along the south Indian coastline. Ibn Battuta, Wang Dayuan, and Marco Polo all provide eyewitness accounts of Chinese merchants in the Indian ports. The Qubilai Khan court

³⁰ The term, ‘Pax Mongolica,’ (c. 1280-1360) describes “the period during which Mongol domination seemingly guaranteed security on the Eurasian commercial routes.” Di Cosmo, “Black Emporia,” 90.

³¹ Tansen Sen, “The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries.” *Asia Major* 19, part 1/2, (2006).

³² Tansen Sen, “The Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks to Southern Asia, 1200-1450,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no. 421-453 (2006): 431.

considered trade with India so important that it dispatched an unprecedented sixteen diplomatic envoys to India, primarily along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts. The Yuan official Yang Tingbi led several missions to these regions, determined to expand China's political connections with India. Tingbi describes India's pluralistic landscape, and reports meeting with Syrian Christian and Muslim communities in the south. These communities had inhabited India for centuries, but also were known to have provided sanctuary for diaspora traders.³³ Moreover, Yuan officials traveled to India on private trading ships, demonstrating cooperation between court and merchants in order to expand their reach in Indian markets and politics.

While literary evidence documents the Chinese presence in South India, no Chinese-style architecture or sculpture remains to add tangible material to written accounts of this population. We know that there was at least one Chinese-style building, described by the eyewitness fourteenth century Chinese travel writer, Wang Dayuan.³⁴ Dayuan claims to have seen a pagoda (*stūpa*) in Nagapattinam, a coastal port city near Tanjavur District in central Tamil Nadu, built by Chinese sojourners and inscribed with Chinese characters dating its construction to 1267.³⁵ He writes that,

³³ The *Yuanshi* records Tingbi's visits to India. Also attesting to the close relationships between the countries is Yang Tingbi offering asylum to a local Muslim official, Sayyid, who was at odds with the south Indian court (Ma'abar). Sayyid was brought to China and granted a Korean bride by Qubilai Khan. Noboru Karashima, "Trade Relations between South India and China During the 13th and 14th centuries," *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations* 1 (1989), 72.

³⁴ Sir Walter Elliot, "The Edifice Formerly Known as the Chinese or Jaina Pagoda at Nagapatnam," *Indian Antiquary* 7(1878).

³⁵ Medieval Nagapattinam appears to have received much architectural patronage from abroad. The 'Larger Leyden Plates,' record that in 1005 Rajaraja I contributed funds to a Buddhist vihara (Chulamanivarman *vihara*), the height of which "belittled Mount Meru." The grant specifies the Srivijayan king, Chulimanivarman, sponsored its construction, and that it was completed by his son. Rajendra I later renamed the *vihara* 'Rajendrachola-perumpalli.' Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, 115.

On a related note, Karashima et al. deciphered an inscription on a bronze Buddha image, stylistically assignable to 11th century Nagapattinam, from the Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III collection (last exhibited in 1992 at the Idenitsu Museum of Arts in Tokyo). It reveals that the image was

surrounded by trees and rocks, is a pagoda constructed with mud bricks. [It is] several meters high. Chinese characters written [on it] say: ‘Construction completed in the eight lunar month of *Xianchun* 3 (1267).’ It is said, people from China visited the place that year and wrote [the characters] on the stone and engraved them. Up to the present time, they have not faded.³⁶

Several scholars have speculated that this structure was a building known to have existed in Nagapattinam and destroyed by Jesuits in 1867 (Fig. 4.2).³⁷ A drawing shows that the tiered, brick structure might resemble Chinese archetypes, including contemporaneous pagodas in Quanzhou and surrounding region, like the thirteenth century ‘East Pagoda’ on Quanzhou’s Kaiyuan temple’s grounds (Fig. 4.3).³⁸ Peter Schalk, conversely, has suggested the structure’s resemblance to Indo-Javanese constructions from between the eighth and tenth centuries, citing the Candi Punta dewa from Central Java and Buddhist stūpas in Sumatra as stylistic parallels. He speculates that rulers from these countries

donated by the padinen-vishayam (another name for the Ainnurruvar) to the ‘Rajendrachola-perumpalli’ in Nagapattinam. *AMCA*, 57-61.

³⁶Wang Dayuan, *Daoyi zhilue* 島夷誌略 (*Brief Records of the Island Barbarians*), Annot. Su Jiqing, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, 285.

³⁷ See John Guy, “The Lost Temples of Nagapattinam and Quanzhou.”

³⁸ Some scholars are dubious about identifying the Nagapattinam monument with a “pagoda,” suggesting instead that it is a dilapidated *gōpura*. Nonetheless, Quanzhou has many contemporaneous *stūpa* examples, including the ‘east tower’ at the Kaiyuan si, and the ca. twelfth century Gushao and Liusheng pagodas in the neighboring regions, which are today identified as old “lighthouses,” and located along the Quanzhou coastline. I was unable to find published work about them. For information on the Kaiyuan pagodas see Gustave Ecke and Paul Demiéville’s, *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton: a Study of Later Buddhist Sculpture in China*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935).

might have sent their artisans to complete this structure.³⁹ The lack of Chinese structures implies that Chinese merchants did not establish permanent diasporic communities in India, corroborating Tansen Sen's conclusion that they "were more likely sojourners who frequented the Indian coasts from their bases in Southeast Asia."⁴⁰

In Quanzhou, however, commissions by resident foreign communities were commonplace. In addition to the Shiva temple constructed by Tamil merchants, Arab merchants constructed at least six mosques in Quanzhou, all of which were probably destroyed in the foreign revolt occurring between 1357 and 1366 that is described below. The Shengyou si (Ashab mosque) has been reconstructed, and archaeological excavations have revealed a thick layer of ash in the sublayer of the stratigraphy from the Yuan period's end, which confirms that the mosque was burned during battle.⁴¹ Hugh Clark notes that the Shengyou si bears a dated inscription from 1009-10, stating it was "the first [Islamic] place of worship for the people of this place [Quanzhou], which he argues, "is the earliest evidence that Muslims were part of [the foreign] community."⁴²

The end of Mongol rule in Quanzhou was marked by a dramatic series of events, in which the foreign population took control of the city for a decade between 1357-1366.⁴³ Historical accounts refer to the event as "yitzepashi," which has been interpreted

³⁹ Peter Schalk, "The Period of the Imperial Cōlar. Tamiḷakam," in *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamiḷakam and Īlam*, Part 2, ed. Peter Schalk, (Stockholm: Uppsala University, 2002), 542.

⁴⁰ Tansen Sen, "The Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks to Southern Asia, 1200-1450," 423.

⁴¹ Pearson et al., "Quanzhou Archaeology," 35.

⁴² Hugh Clark, "Muslims and Hindus in the Culture and Morphology of Quanzhou from the Tenth to the Thirteenth century," *Journal of World History* 6, No. 1 (Spring, 1995), 57.

⁴³ See Shinji Maejima, "The Muslims in Ch'uan-Chou at the End of the Yuan Dynasty, Part 1." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 31 (1973): 27-51 and "The Muslims in Ch'uan-Chou at the End of the Yuan Dynasty, Part 2." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 32 (1973): 47-71. This was not the first mass killing of foreigners. In Yangzhou city in the 760s, "several thousand

as the phonetic rendering of the Persian word for army, “ipsah.” Known in several other sources as “the revolt of the Persian garrison,” its immediate cause was Muslim disapproval of a “foreign temple of Buddhism” (*Fanfo si*), possibly the Shiva temple, built on the grounds of the former governor’s residence.⁴⁴ During the course of the battle, two Persian merchants, Saifutin (i.e., Saif ud-Din) and Amiliting (i.e., Amin ud-Din), along with Nawuna, a Persian trade superintendant of maritime affairs, and the son-in-law of Pu Shougeng, led thousands of troops, composed primarily of foreigners, to take control of Quanzhou.⁴⁵ The foreign troops devoted the last five years of battle to expanding trade, despite Mongol restrictions, but were defeated in 1366 by Han Chinese forces of Fujian Province. Shortly thereafter, Ming officials issued a ban on all private maritime trade, which lasted until the Qing period (1644-1912).⁴⁶

Most studies state that this battle signaled the demise of all foreign populations in Quanzhou. On the contrary, I contend that these readings are exaggerated, as several references prove that the Quanzhou foreign population was not annihilated entirely during the revolt. One records that foreign Quanzhou merchants resettled in northern China towards the end of the Yuan dynasty. Others describe how a successful foreign merchant, previously based in Quanzhou and resettled in Mingzhou, led a group of foreign merchants to pay tribute at the newly established Ming court.⁴⁷ In the Chinese

foreign merchants from Persia” involved in a riot were killed. Clark, “Muslims and Hindus,” 54.

⁴⁴ Pearson et al., “Quanzhou Archaeology,” 29.

⁴⁵ Maejima, “Muslims in Ch’uan-Chou,” 123-4.

⁴⁶ See Roderich Ptak, “From Quanzhou to the Sulu Zone and Beyond: Questions Related to the Early Fourteenth Century.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 269-94.

⁴⁷ So, *Prosperity*, 125.

records, he is identified as a *yuanren*, or “a person from far away,” indicating a continued practice of classifying non-Chinese individuals as foreign. However, other records indicate that the boundaries between foreigner and Chinese had been blurred by the time of battle. A mid-sixteenth century record states that “in the [Ipsah rebellion] all foreigners (*xiyü ren*) were wiped out, [and] some Chinese were killed by mistake because of their hair color and high noses and the tombs of Moslems were plundered.”⁴⁸ The reference to the “Chinese who were killed by mistake” might indicate the presence of multiracial individuals, or, at the very least, the recognition of ethnically diverse individuals as Chinese.

PART 2: RECONSTRUCTING THE SHIVA TEMPLE

Despite the wealth of written and visual material attesting to the presence of Indian merchants in Quanzhou over many centuries, there are no contemporaneous textual records of a Tamil merchant community or Shiva temple apart from the carvings. In the absence of texts, the carvings constitute a rich, virtually unstudied corpus of artistic and archaeological evidence, which yields valuable information about its patrons. As Peter Rockwell has observed, “any object worked in stone is a document that, correctly understood, describes its own manufacture.”⁴⁹ In the following reconstruction, I do not suggest a site of origin for the Shiva temple or its patrons, devoting my attention instead to the presence of different groups who worked on the temple. Through stylistic analysis

⁴⁸ Chen Dasheng, “A Brunei Sultan in the Early 14th Century: Study of an Arabic Gravestone.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1992): 10.

⁴⁹ Peter Rockwell, *The Art of Stoneworking*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5. Quoted in Elizabeth Lambourn, “Carving and Communities: Marble Carving for Muslim Patrons at Khambhat and around the Indian Ocean Rim, Late Thirteenth-Mid-Fifteenth Centuries.” *Ars Orientalis* (2004), 101.

I identify these parties, using the temple as a lens through which I view the social history of premodern Quanzhou. As Carlo Ginzburg has demonstrated masterfully, indirect evidence has the potential to provide rich details about historical context.⁵⁰ I have attempted to accumulate this kind of evidence here, suggesting the multivalent significations of the temple form, seen from the ground up.

Multiple pieces of evidence suggest that the temple was constructed in the southern part of the city in the mid to late thirteenth century, and destroyed during the Ipsah rebellion in the late fourteenth century. In addition to the style of the carvings, this contention is corroborated by the four sets of archaeological, textual, and material evidence. The first is a bilingual Tamil-Chinese stone inscription, dating the construction of a Shiva temple to 1281. Secondly, beginning in 1947, Quanzhou officials knocked down the city's ancient southern walls, built between 1352-98, and discovered the majority of the Siva temple's carvings.⁵¹ Thirdly, Indic carvings were installed in the Kaiyuan temple, the city's main site of Buddhist worship, as part of a necessary renovation in 1389 or 1408, after a large portion of the temple had been burned during the Ipsah rebellion.⁵² Lastly, a sixteenth century written reference, in *The Genealogy of*

⁵⁰ See Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England), 1999 and *The Cheese and Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi, (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1980.

⁵¹ I will elaborate on the connections between the temple's destruction and the Ipsah rebellion below.

Islamic and Christian steles were also found in the wall, further suggesting that the *Ipsah* rebellion resulted in an attack on all foreigners. Furthermore, Chen Dasheng notes that production of Islamic tombstones bearing Arabic inscriptions essentially ceases after 1366, the date which marks the rebellion's end. Chen Dasheng, "A Brunei Sultan," 12.

Wu Wenliang records find sites for individual objects, revealing their haphazard recovery (see Appendix). As there has been no official excavation, carvings continue to be discovered up to the present day. *Quanzhou zong jiao shi ke*, (Beijing: Ke xue chu ban she, 2005).

⁵² A Kaiyuan temple gazetteer states that Monk Huiyuan rebuilt the hall in 1389 after the fire, while Monk Zhichang renovated the hall and extended a terrace in 1408. Ellen Wang records that the Tonghuai gate was

the Jin Lineage in Quanzhou, referring to a “foreign temple of Buddhism,” which was built during the Yuan dynasty and destroyed at the end of the period, located in the city’s south.⁵³ The temple’s short lifespan corresponds to the transition from Yuan to Ming periods of governance. The temple’s creation and destruction can be viewed as indicators of the two governments’ divergent attitudes towards foreigners.⁵⁴

Current Locations of the Temple Carvings

The Shiva temple’s carvings are dispersed across five primary sites in Quanzhou and nearby regions. Almost all are carved in greenish-gray granite, widely available in the nearby hills and used frequently in the region’s architecture. It deserves notice that while the use of granite in architecture is ubiquitous within southern India, it is unique to Fujian Province in China, possibly indicating the transmission of architectural knowledge

reinforced with stone in 1389, the same year of the Kaiyuan temple’s first renovation. Personal communication with Ellen Wang, 7/14/08.

⁵³ Qingzhang Yang, “Quanzhou Yindujiao Diaoke Yuanyuan Kao,” in *Quanzhougang yu haishang Sichouzhilu*, Zhongguo Haiyang Xuehui, Quanzhou Shizhengfu Bian, (Beijing, Sheke Chubanshe, 2002), 427-439.

⁵⁴ Although it is beyond of the scope of the thesis to summarize subsequent periods, reciprocal activity on the India-China maritime route continued well into the Ming period (1368-1644), but with new policies that changed diplomatic and trade relations dramatically. Rejecting past policies favoring foreigners, the Ming officials reintroduced Sinocentric political rhetoric, celebrating China as the “great unified empire,” *da yitong* 大一统。 This vision saw the Chinese emperor as civilizer of the world’s barbarians,” resulting in increased tribute missions, wherein titles were bestowed on Indian Ocean states by Chinese officials. Tansen Sen proposes that the aim of these missions was not to promote trade, but rather to “bring the Indian kingdoms into the folds of the rhetorical Chinese world order.” For example, Zheng He’s famous maritime voyages to India, in which tribute and submission to China were of preeminent concern, exemplify these tendencies. Sen, “Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks,” 447.

Zheng He’s Indian Ocean activities can be traced through Chinese texts and multilingual inscriptions. His “trilingual inscription at Galle,” written in Chinese, Tamil, and Persian, attests to intercultural mercantile populations living in Sri Lanka: each linguistic portion refers to a different god (Buddha, Shiva, and Allah respectively), and details the prices of multiregional merchandise. Historical events also reveal the site’s multiculturalism. In deposing the Sri Lanka ruler, Zheng He contended with Vijayanagara allies and Tamil merchants! See Venkata Raghotham, “The Trilingual Inscription of Zheng He: A Historical Study of Vijayanagara Response to the Ming Maritime Expeditions in the Fifteenth Century,” *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 33 (2007), 16-22.

from India to Fujian. Today, granite stone carving persists in modern Fujian, especially in the nearby city of Hui'an, while numerous mined out quarries, such as the site of Shilong, attest to several centuries of stone production.

The largest repository of Indic carvings is preserved in the walls and site museum of the Kaiyuan Temple, supposedly built in the Tang period in 686 CE, the oldest and most important site of Buddhist piety in Quanzhou.⁵⁵ 153 of these carvings, mostly installed in the plinth of the temple's front porch, have been used as part of the basement frieze (Fig. 4.4). Their style and placement reveal they were not part of the temple's original conception, but are instead reused materials from an Indic temple. Two *citrakhaṇḍa* columns with sculptural reliefs of Hindu gods prominently frame the back entrance to the main hall, and sit on a raised stone platform that served as an open-air walkway for circumambulating the main building (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6). Two other carvings from the temple's cornice (*kapōta*) are located in a small museum on the temple grounds.

The Quanzhou Maritime Museum has the second largest repository of Indic carvings. In the 1950s, Quanzhou resident and collector Wu Wenliang noticed these antiquities lying in fields or reused as building materials in local homes, and began to collect them. He later donated his collection to the museum. Some of the museum's Indic carvings also were moved from the grounds of the Kaiyuan Temple. The Indic carvings comprise about a fourth of the museum's collection. Other notable objects include medieval period carvings bearing Christian, Islamic, Manichean, and Nestorian iconography inscribed with languages such as Persian, Arabic, Tamil, Italian, Latin, and

⁵⁵ Gustav Ecke and Paul Demiéville argue that its current plan is no earlier than the Song dynasty. *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton: a Study of Later Buddhist Sculpture in China*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935).

Syriac. The Quanzhou Maritime Museum continues to acquire new carvings through ongoing finds and gifts.⁵⁶ 117 of the museum's carvings are clearly architectural fragments from a south Indian style temple and are described in detail below. They include fluted pilasters, capitals with flower blossom extensions (*puṣpapōtigāis*), square columns with carved central band pillars (*citrakhaṇḍas*), base mouldings carved with lotus petals (*padma jagatīs*), composite leonine figure bas reliefs (*vyālas*), cornices (*kapōtas*), door jambs, vase shaped pillar part (*laśunas*), cushion shaped pillar part above *laśuna* (*ghaṭas*), decorated pillar part below *ghaṭa* (*mālāsthāna*), finials (*stūpikās*), sculptural panels, a stairway banister (*hastihasta*), a portion of a grill window screen (*jāla*), and a Vishnu statue, carved in the round.⁵⁷ The carvings are in an exhibition room at the back of the museum; apart from a few resting on display podiums, they are stacked haphazardly upon one another (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8).

The Tianhou gong temple in Quanzhou has two Indic columns with the same dimensions as the columns in the Kaiyuan Temple and Quanzhou Maritime Museum (Fig. 4.9). The temple dates to the second year of Qingyuan reign period of the Southern Song dynasty (c. 1196), and is dedicated to the local goddess Mazu, who is traditionally worshipped by sailors. Though others have suggested that the pillars are later replicas of the Indic originals, I have concluded that they were part of the Shiva temple because they have the same dimensions.⁵⁸ The most noticeable difference is that the Tianhou gong

⁵⁶ During my stay in Quanzhou, a Quanzhou resident gave the Quanzhou Maritime Museum two carvings, found underneath his house, both of which were base mouldings of the Shiva temple.

⁵⁷ The presence of a Vishnu sculpture does not preclude the temple's primary affiliation as Shaivite, and might have been included within a subsidiary shrine.

⁵⁸ Har Prasad Ray speculates that both the Kaiyuan temple and Tianhou gong's Indic pillars are "Chinese copies of Indian originals modeled on similar columns and found in the temples of South India," but does

pillar medallions are carved with floral and vegetal motifs, and exclude figurative Hindu iconography. The pillars sit atop a raised stone platform and form part of an ambulatory hall that surrounds the main building. The pillars stand out insofar as they frame the front door of the rear building.

The Xingji pavilion is a small shrine in Chidian village, Jinjiang country, about fifteen kilometers outside of Quanzhou's city center. It contains a large sculptural panel, with modern repainting in brilliant red and gold, of the Hindu goddess, Kali, which the local population now worships as the bodhisattva Guanyin (Fig. 4.10). She is depicted with wild hair and wearing a necklace, flanked by two female attendants, and spearing a demon underfoot. The panel was previously located in a shrine next to a small bridge, about one kilometer away from the village, but during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the bridge and shrine were dismantled and the carvings were cemented into a wall surrounding the village.⁵⁹ In the 1980s, the village residents dismantled the wall, and built a shrine for the carving.

Finally, the Xiamen University Museum has a small collection of Indic carvings, including a doorjamb, and a facing stone bearing the Shiva temple's foundation inscription that names the temple's patron, god, and foundation date of 1281. This

not explain his reasoning. See Ray, "Indian Settlements in Medieval China: A Preliminary Study," *Indian Journal of Asian Studies* 1 vol. 1 (1989), 74.

I could not find any information on the Tianhou gong's renovations, but speculate that the pillars were installed around the same time the other Indic pillars were placed at the Kaiyuan Temple, ca. 1408.

⁵⁹ I spoke with a lifetime village resident, approximately seventy-five years old, who remembered seeing the panel *in situ*, by the bridge. Although we cannot determine the construction date of this bridge because it has been dismantled, we can assume that it was an older bridge since Mao Zedong targeted it in his anti-culture campaign due to its religious association. Quanzhou monks built bridges to accrue *dharma*, or religious merit. To my knowledge, there has been no significant scholarship of Fujian province's bridges or pavilions; however, the region is renowned for its profusion of extant bridges, many of which date from as early as the Song dynasty. See Hugh Clark's *Community, Trade, and Networks*.

information is written in Tamil, and appears above a line of as yet syntactically indecipherable Chinese text (Fig. 4.11). While the individual characters are perfectly clear, there has not yet been a satisfying interpretation of their meaning.⁶⁰

Evidence for the Shiva Temple's Original Site

Though we lack thorough archaeological surveys of Quanzhou, several studies allow a partial reconstruction of its premodern landscape. The city's proximity to the Jin River allowed large boats to travel directly there from Quanzhou Bay and to continue further north to Nan'an. Originally square in layout and aligned with the cardinal directions, as prescribed by traditional Chinese city planning, in the tenth century Quanzhou expanded its walls into an irregular trapezoidal form, surrounded by a moat (Fig. 4.12).⁶¹ By the early thirteenth century, the population had swelled to around 200,000, with 30,000 expatriate Muslim residents, and a new flank wall was built in 1230 on the south side of the city to encompass the greatly enlarged commercial sector. This area housed the majority of the foreign population,⁶² and was officially designated the foreign residential quarter (*fanfeng*). Most commercial transactions occurred outside the main wall near the Jin River.

This area seems the most likely for the Shiva temple's original location. In addition to it having been a residential and commercial center for foreigners, the city's

⁶⁰ The characters are: 经山矩师无理籍通日智和路. See footnote 71.

⁶¹ Jenny Purtle suggests that the break in traditional Chinese urban planning symbolically asserted Quanzhou's autonomy from central Chinese authority. Paper delivered at University of Minnesota workshop: India in China/China in India, September 2008.

⁶² The southern city's land was low-lying marsh, constantly flooding, making it a less desirable living area. Clark, "Muslims and Hindus," 66.

southern quadrant was the site where the majority of the Indic carvings were found. Wu Wenliang has documented the discovery date and find sites of much of this material. Ruins from Islamic monuments and tombstones have also been found in the general vicinity, further substantiating the area's *fanfeng* designation.⁶³ Additionally, more than one text refers to Indians inhabiting Quanzhou's south: Zhao Rugua records that a man named Lobazhiligan, from southwest India, lived with his son in Quanzhou's southern suburbs, and a sixteenth century text refers to a "foreign temple of Buddhism" that was located in the city's south and destroyed at the end of the Yuan period.⁶⁴ Additionally, a Jinjiang county gazetteer mentions "a pool associated with the foreign temple," which probably refers to a Hindu temple tank.⁶⁵

Analyzing the Carvings

After the temple was disassembled, the carvings no longer served a religious purpose; rather, their symbolism changed and the stones were infused with a new set of meanings. It was only over the past century, when these carvings were gathered in a museum setting, that they were assigned a "Hindu" identity. However, looking at the stones closely, it is clear that even in their original position in a consecrated Hindu temple, they were never unambiguously "Hindu". Rather, they are the products of several communities and cultural practices whose boundaries are far from clear. Despite the lack of historical texts establishing a Tamil community living in Quanzhou, the stones

⁶³ Chen, "A Brunei Sultan," 5.

⁶⁴ Clark, "Muslims and Hindus," 62.

⁶⁵ Qingzhang Yang, "Quanzhou Yindujiao Diaoke Yuanyuan Kao," 428.

themselves provide information about their patrons' position in medieval Quanzhou society.

Though they represent only a fraction of the temple's original structure, the carvings display a large variety of architectural features that provide useful indications of its layout, form, and makers. Individual features of the carvings reproduce precisely the proportion and form of the temple, as well as the techniques that went into its construction. The builders used South Indian construction techniques, first stacking granite slabs to create a plinth, upon which they built the temple walls without using cement. Composed of three parts, the walls consisted of inner and outer walls, filled in with piles of rough stone blocks (Fig. 4.13). Masons then carved rectangular stone blocks with dimensions on average of 1'8" x 10" x 11," and sculpted them according to Dravida architectural morphology. The sides of the carved blocks were left rough in order to grip the other scored surfaces, while the backs remained uncarved, in order to accommodate the piled stones between the two walls. These stone blocks were then stacked atop one another and surmounted by a cornice and superstructure.

Moreover, subtle architectural details also observable in south Indian temple precedents clearly show that the temple's artisans and architect(s) were familiar with Dravida temple form. It is likely that stonemasons and an architect travelled with the merchants to China, since Tamil merchant associations are known to have moved with huge entourages, including artists.⁶⁶ The treatment of ornament, however, is markedly different from Tamil counterparts; in contrast to the style seen in south India, it is executed in low relief, paralleling contemporaneous stone carving in Quanzhou, and has

⁶⁶ Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds*, 5.

distinct patterns that appear on many contemporaneous monuments in Quanzhou, demonstrating collaboration with local artisanal communities.⁶⁷

It is difficult indeed to speculate on the identities of the artisans and builders responsible for the temple's construction. Little is known about the patrons themselves, let alone the artists who they employed. From studying the ornamental aspects of the structure, I have argued that the merchant patrons employed local Quanzhou artisans to complete their monument. It is also very likely that artisans versed in Dravida architectural style might have travelled with the merchants to Quanzhou on their boats, either directly from the Tamil region, or via Southeast Asia, where other Tamil trading diaspora communities were based. It would not have been the first time that artisans travelled long distances to work on important commissions. Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055), a translator and religious figure often credited with the revival of Buddhism in Tibet and the construction of multiple monasteries there, is said to have brought Buddhist images, manuscripts, and 32 Kashmiri artists to western Tibet to paint murals at several eleventh century monasteries in Ladakh and Guge.⁶⁸ Moreover, in an important article Angela Howard demonstrates that a taste for Indian Buddhist aesthetic made a deep impact on the artistic landscape of sixth century China. She proposes that the maritime route from India via Southeast Asian port cities was a major conduit for the transmission of artistic style, brought by itinerant monks and artists. The pathways from India to China were many, and "waves of Indian motifs and stylistic modes, which spread in China at

⁶⁷ Risha Lee "Rethinking Community: The Indic Carvings of Quanzhou," in *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions*, edited by Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja, (Singapore: ISEAS, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 232.

⁶⁸ Pratapaditya Pal, *A Buddhist Paradise: The Murals of Alchi Western Himalayas*, (New Delhi: Kumar Gallery, 1982), 20.

different times and by means of different geographic venues, also produced different artistic results.”⁶⁹ In other words, artists from many different regions of India had been circulating in China at least six centuries prior to the Quanzhou temple’s construction.

The artistic climate in thirteenth century Quanzhou was clearly multicultural, for, as we know, by this time the city had one of the largest ports in the world. The Shiva temple’s Tamil merchant patrons comprised but one of the many foreign communities living there, which included Arabs, Persians, Europeans, and other minority groups, in addition to a substantial Indian population. All of these groups commissioned buildings and monuments that can be seen in Quanzhou today. Looking at these monuments’ ornament, in particular, alongside that of the Quanzhou columns, we see many similarities. For example, bands containing a scrolling peony and lotus motif encircle the chamfered parts of the Quanzhou columns (Fig. 4.14). This ornamental motif appears on a Christian gravestone from the same period (Fig. 4.15).⁷⁰ The cloud motif is also ubiquitous on a variety of Quanzhou’s monuments. It appears clearly on the arm support on the side of a colossal statue of a Daoist deity, located in the hills outside of the city (Figs. 4.16 and 4.17), in an Indic carving (Fig. 4.18), as well as on the bottom portion of a gravestone with Arabic script, dated to 1302 (Fig. 4.19). Considering that nearly identical forms of ornament were used to adorn a variety of city monuments, regardless of cultural origin, it seems likely that patrons of diverse communities employed the same group of artisans.

⁶⁹ Angela Howard, “Pluralism of Styles in Sixth-Century China: A Reaffirmation of Indian Models,” *Ars Orientalis* 35 (2008), 70.

⁷⁰ Iain Gardner, Samuel Lieu, and Ken Parry, *From Palmyra to Zayton: Epigraphy and Iconography*, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2005.

The Bilingual Inscription

A single inscription, written in both Chinese and Tamil on a slab of diabase stone, records the consecration of a Shiva image in 1281 (Fig. 4.11). The slab, which would have been built into the temple's exterior wall, is broken in half, making a definitive reading difficult.⁷¹ Choosing diabase instead of granite—the stone used for most of the temple's architectural carvings—signals the adoption of local inscription practices over those of south India. Most inscriptions from Quanzhou (including Islamic and Christian) are on diabase, a fine-grained, volcanic rock, diverging from the Tamil regional practice of recording inscriptions on granite.⁷² Quanzhou artisans might have preferred diabase's softer surface, which made carving intricate characters and letters easier.

The slab is inscribed in two scripts, the majority of the inscription appears in Tamil, the language of India's deep south, while the last line is in syntactically indecipherable Chinese.⁷³ The Tamil text translates as follows:

⁷¹ T.N. Subramaniam first translated the inscription in "A Tamil Colony," which was later reinterpreted Subbarayalu and Karashima in *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activity*, 16. The main difference between the two readings is the temple name: Subramaniam reads it as "tirukatalisvaram" (which translates as 'the lord Shiva of the ocean' and Subbarayalu and Karshima as "tirukannisvaram" (which translates as "the Holy Lord [Shiva] of the Khan." If the latter name were an accurate transcription, it would have alluded to temple traditions in India, where temples were commonly named after kings, such as the Rajarajesvaram temple in Tanjavur, (after Rajaraja), and at Gangaikondacholapuram, which translates as one of Rajendra I's titles, "the Chola who took the Ganges." Unfortunately, the split in the stone prevents a definitive reading. I have corrected the name in my translation to reflect my interpretation of the script.

⁷² Chen Dasheng records that "of the 111 gravestones with Arabic inscriptions found in Quanzhou, 91 were made of diabase and the 20 others of granite." *Corpus d'inscriptions*, 6.

⁷³ The individual characters are recognizable (经山矩师无理籍通日智和路), but syntactically nonsensical either when read from left to right or vice versa. Tansen Sen has offered the following tentative translation: "Luhezili, [who was] versed [in Chinese language] (alternatively, "[after] gaining access [to China]"), compiled the *Sutra of Torching the Mountain Without Assistance* (i.e. self enlightenment?)." In a later footnote, he then suggests yet another alternate reading of the last line: "... compiled the sutra of the Great Mountain (Mahameru?) without the help of a teacher," stating that the seemingly Buddhist character of the Chinese inscription might indicate that the Chinese was added later, and that it might have been reused in a Buddhist context. In *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade*, pp. 228-229 and p. 320 ft. 110. Since

Obeisance to Hara. Let there be prosperity! On the day Chitra in month of Chittirai in the Saka year 1203, the Tavachchakkarvarttikal Sambandapperumal graciously caused, in accordance with the *firman* (written permission) of Chekachai Khan (the Mongol ruler), the installation of the God Udaiyar Tirukata . . . nita(sva)ram Udaiya nayanar (Shiva) for the welfare of the king Chekachai Khan.⁷⁴

The Tamil text offers several valuable pieces of information: it praises Shiva, the primary deity of the temple; names the primary patron, Sambandar Perumal, a common Tamil name;⁷⁵ asserts that the installation of Shiva's image enjoyed the grace of the imperial

there is no indication that the slab was ever reused in another building and the textual meaning has remained inscrutable to the majority of Chinese scholars, it seems unwise to accept this translation.

David Yu, an independent, Los Angeles based scholar, instead proposes that the characters are a phonetic transcription of the patron's name, Samandar Perumal, and title, "Tavachchakkartigal"; however, the phonetic pronunciation in local Quanzhou dialect, "*Qīng shān gé shī bú lǐ jīp li tōng lí dì hó lòu*" (transcribed during a conversation with Wang Lianmao, the Quanzhou Maritime Museum's former director), does not support this interpretation. See David Yu, "Riddle in Quanzhou," unpublished manuscript, 2008.

⁷⁴ This is my transcription of the inscription:

1. *Harah: svasti sri [sagaptam 1203] vatu cittirai*
2. *ccittirai nal sri ceyc. . . cetkan tirumenikku nan*
3. *raka udaiyar tirukata . . . nitaramudeya nayanarai*
4. *eriyarulap panni . . . nar campandap perumal*
5. *ana tavaccakkaravakiti . . . kal ceykacaikan parman*
6. *padi*

⁷⁵ Interestingly, the name fits within both Shiva and Vishnu worshipping lexicon, suggesting a further cross-pollination of religious beliefs, which was common to the time. Sambandar is one of the four most important Tamil saints and Shiva devotees, while Perumal, which translates as "the big one" or, "the greatest," usually is used as an honorific of the god Vishnu.

Mongol authority (Chekachai Khan); and dates the monument to 1281.⁷⁶ Clearly, the temple patrons acted under the auspices of the Chinese imperial authorities in constructing the Shiva temple since the inscription states that they received his written permission (*firman*).

In the context of contemporary south Indian temple inscriptions, the absence of a contemporary monarch's name is striking. Generally, a Tamil inscription's first line records the king's ruling year, which, in this case, would have belonged to the Pandya or Chola line. Thus, its absence might indicate the merchant patrons' autonomy—that the patron, Sambandar Perumal, prefaced his name with *Tavach Chakravartigal* might signal an effort to elevate his status in the absence of south Indian political authority. *Chakkravartigal*, meaning [*dharmic*] wheel turner (*chakravartin*), was a title reserved for kings, while *tavach*, i.e. *tapas*, signifies the penance holy persons perform to gain gods' favor. Additionally, Mongol rulers would have known the title of *chakravartin*. Khubilai Khan was an adherent of Tibetan Buddhism, and invited the famous Tibetan lama 'Phags-pa to his court in 1253. 'Phags-pa then assisted the Mongols in their claims to legitimacy by declaring them to be of a long line of Buddhist *chakravartin* rulers.⁷⁷

Though the Chinese text has proved elusive for scholars, its very presence underneath the Tamil script attests to the salience of both languages within the community, and indicates that the temple's patrons spoke to at least three linguistic audiences: Chinese-speaking, Tamil-speaking, and bilingual. Whether the temple's

⁷⁶ Including the *Saka* year accords more to dating practices in Karnataka, rather than in Tamil Nadu, which might reference the multiregional groups who might have comprised the Tamil merchant population. I thank Katherine Kasdorf for this suggestion.

⁷⁷ Stephen G. Haw, *Marco Polo's China: A Venetian in the Realm of Khubilai Khan*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 39.

patrons used Chinese or Tamil to communicate with other members of Quanzhou society cannot be established. Furthermore, Tamil may not have been the worshippers' mother tongue, and the inscription might index symbolic reverence of the language, rather than actual vernacular use. However, that the Tamil portion of the inscription — and not the Chinese — recognizes and salutes the Mongol Khanate is striking insofar as it demonstrates that a knowledgeable, perhaps bilingual community was present, capable of recognizing the inscription's significance and of conveying its value to the Mongol authority. In other words, by the time the temple was built, Quanzhou's Tamil merchant community had engrained itself in the city's social fabric, to the extent that it was not only able to acknowledge the Chinese authority's political sovereignty, it was also *recognized* in the Chinese community.

The inscription indicates that the community viewed itself as distinct from but in deference to the Mongol Khanate. The receipt of Chekachai Khan's *firman* (the term's Persian origin also reflects a multicultural society) indicates that the merchants participated within the local, legalistic system, as they also incorporated Chekachai Khan into Indic concepts of temple construction. In India, "[the] architectural action is part of a symbolic political transaction, in which the merit accruing from the building's foundation is dedicated to... [the] overlord."⁷⁸ In this case, the dharma-accruing overlord is the Mongol Khan, Chekachai Khan.

Architectural Carvings

⁷⁸ Phil Wagoner, "Fortuitous Convergences and Essential Ambiguities: Transcultural Political Elites in the Medieval Deccan," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 3, no. 3, (December 1999), 253.

In what follows, I examine the temple's architectural components in detail. As explored in Chapter Three, a Dravida-style temple is composed of multiple architectural strata, all of which have precise Sanskrit and Tamil names. By reconstructing the temple virtually, I aim to uncover the processes through which multiple communities conceptualized and created the Shiva temple and read its form as connoting multivalent meanings. Through comparative analysis with south Indian temples, I show how different portions of the Shiva temple mimic, translate, and depart from preexisting models. I divide the temple's main sanctum into three parts: base mouldings, wall, and superstructure, followed by a subsection on the composition of pilasters. I then identify the carvings that constituted the temple's front porch and interior.

Base mouldings

1st level (*upapitham*)

Many of the Shiva temple's base mouldings are preserved in the Kaiyuan temple, where they have been reused along the plinth of the front porch of the main hall (*baodian si*) and in an attached rectangular platform with steps on its three sides leading to the main entrance. A lion and lion-woman creature bas-relief, divided by small columns, runs along the front porch's plinth, and sits atop a large ogee socle that has been carved with lotus petals. The lions closely follow South Indian precedents; they are seen in profile with looped tails, raising their front paws in mid-step (Figs. 4.20). Many panels are broken, but mimic the original pattern of an unbroken section comprising alternating lions and human-headed leonine figures, each one separated by small engaged columns, suggesting that the artisan who installed them in their present location closely modeled

the basement upon his memory of the original Shiva temple. As mentioned above, artisans most likely installed these bas-reliefs into the Kaiyuan temple porch during a renovation in 1389 or 1408. The attached rectangular portion of the porch with steps leading to the main entrance is in fact two-inches shorter than the main hall, suggesting that it is indeed a later addition.

Several temples in south India demonstrate a relatively standard format for base mouldings. For example, the Kampaharesvarar temple's basement, at Tribhuvanam in Tanjavur district (see Chapter Three), consists of a lotus moulding surmounted by a series of bas-reliefs, separated by decorative vertical divisions, just as in Quanzhou (Fig. 3.62). However, the subject matter of the bas-relief panels differs from the lions decorating the basement at Quanzhou, containing dancing figures, puranic episodes, and rearing lions. This slight distinction suggests, perhaps, a lapse of memory or innovation in the mind of the Quanzhou Shiva temple's architect, for leonine figures of the type now visible in the Kaiyuan temple's basement never appear on the bottommost base (*upapitham*) in Tamil-Dravida temples; rather, they always are located slightly higher, in the *adhiṣṭhāna*, where they appear above the *kumuda* (torus) in an architectural component known as the *vyālamāla* (a continuous string of lion or leonine creatures). This feature is seen at the Tiruvalisvarar temple, at Tiruvalisvaram in Tirunelveli District (Fig. 4.21) and a Shiva temple in Agara, in southern Karnataka's Chamarajnagar district (Fig. 4.22). While the leonine forms, in their stylized stances appear nearly identical to the versions in Quanzhou, we note that it is distinguished by a central, sharp depression. Art historians have surmised that this feature mimics impermanent wooden structures, the forms of

which have been referenced in many aspects of Tamil-Dravida temples.⁷⁹ Thus, the transposition of the leonine figures onto the *upapitham* portion of the temple, without the central depression, signals a formal break with the Tamil-Dravida temple type.

2nd level (*Adhiṣṭhāna*)

A thin lotus moulding (Fig. 4.23) surmounted by a straight vertical plinth was located at the *adhiṣṭhāna*'s base. The vertical plinth is reconstructed at the Kaiyuan temple, but is composed of facing stones that mimic the monolithic *jagatīs* used in south Indian construction (Fig. 4.24). Two *jagatī* pieces, carved at right angles, suggest that the wall surrounding the central sanctum had a slight central projection (*bhadra*). Above the *jagatī* was a torus (*kumuda*), chamfered with long, horizontal grooves and framed by two small lotus mouldings (Fig. 4.25).

The next course was a curved cornice (*paṭṭika*) surmounted by a triple ridge (Fig. 4.26) and containing a small cyma moulding with lotus petals carved underneath. This minute feature is not easily seen, and could easily have been omitted while preserving the overall appearance of a Tamil-Dravida style temple; thus its inclusion suggests the presence of a architect or artisan who knew its south Indian counterparts. Below this moulding was a course known as the *kaṇṭha*, containing low relief rectangles at 15-inch intervals. This pattern imitates the wood joints that would have extended through the plinth in no longer extant, wooden architecture in South India. In south Indian examples the *kaṇṭha* usually constitutes its own structural component.

⁷⁹ Much has been written on the connections between perishable architecture and south Indian temples, but see especially Ananda Coomaraswamy's influential essay, "Early Indian Architecture: IV. Huts and Related Temple Types," (ed. Michael. W. Mesiter), *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 15 (Spring, 1988): 5-26.

The base moulding's final course was an enlarged *kaṇṭha* carved with knot patterns, which has been reused in the Kaiyuan temple's subsidiary buildings (Fig. 4.27). Its pattern is somewhat similar to the Ramaswamy temple's at Cheranmadevi in Tirunelveli District (Fig. 4.28; See Chapter Three).

Wall

Several rectangular bas-reliefs would have then been installed as facing stones along the exterior wall. I have mentioned two of these reliefs already—the Kochchenganan episode (Fig. 0.1) and Kali image (Fig. 4.10). As noted in this dissertation's introduction, the Kochchenganan panel illustrates a scene from the *Periyapurāṇam*, in which the king Kochchenganan, in the form of a spider, and an elephant paid daily homage to a Shiva *linga*, while the iconic image of Kali and two devotees today is repainted in brilliant red and gold, and enshrined slightly outside of Quanzhou city where it is worshipped as the bodhisattva Guanyin. A third panel—with the last known location listed as the Palace Museum, Beijing⁸⁰—represents a scene from the life of the saint, Tirumular or Candesvara (Fig. 4.29). Two stories relating to the narrative appear in the *Periyapurāṇam*, both recounting similar episodes in the lives of the Tamil saints, in which they are cowherders who also devote themselves to daily worship of the Shiva *linga*; the cows become so attached to the saints that they approach them, oozing milk from their udders as an additional offering to the *linga*. The Quanzhou panel parallels representations at the Apatsahayesvara temple in Tiruppalanam, Tanjavur

⁸⁰ In 1959, Quanzhou officials donated the relief to the Beijing National History Museum of China to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the PRC's establishment. Wu Wenliang records that it is now in the west passageway (西甬道) of the Noon gate (午門) in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Wu, *Quanzhou Zong Jiao Shi Ke*, 490-91.

district (Fig. 4.30) and the Shiva temple at Tiruttandanapuram, Sivaganga district (4.31).⁸¹ In all of these panels, a cow on the viewer's left stands above the *linga*, illustrating it with its own milk, while the saint Tirumalar sits underneath a tree at the right. In the Quanzhou panel, the saint has been effaced, suggesting that non-Hindus altered the image for continued, recontextualized worship in a later period.⁸²

The *dēvakōṣṭha* is a niche on the temple exterior, frequently containing sculptures of deities and framed by pilasters. In Quanzhou, there likely would have been one *dēvakōṣṭha* at the center of each of sanctum's three main walls; however, they would have been too shallow to accommodate images. Each *dēvakōṣṭha* would have been topped by a lintel with a projecting cornice (*kapōta*) with a cyma recta moulding underneath (Fig. 4.32). The cornice is adorned with small demon faces, variants of the *kuḍu* (decorative arch motif).⁸³ The *kuḍu*'s demonic faces with bulging eyes, triangular nose, and pointed ears adopt Quanzhou's local physiognomic conventions—for example,

⁸¹ The Thirumular episode appears at many sites, including the Gomuktisvara temple at Tiruvadaturai. In 2008, a rare 14th century image, sculpted in the round, was discovered in the Shiva temple at Manjakkudi, in Arathangi Taluk, Pudukkottai District. S. Ganesan, "Rare Sculpture Found," last modified December 18, 2008, <http://www.hindu.com/2008/12/18/stories/2008121854190500.htm>

⁸² Wu records that the Kochchengan and Thirumular panels were discovered in 1925, built into the walls of a textile burner, to the north of the town near "Xiaoshan Congzhu" (Small Mountain Bamboo Grove Pavilion) near the "White Dog Temple." Wu Wenliang, 520.

⁸³ The *kudu* derives from the horseshoe-like arch, or *gavaksha*, that appears in the earliest northern Indian Buddhist *chaityas*, which eventually becomes a window-like ornament in south Indian temples. As Hoekveld-Meijer has demonstrated, the *kudu* has an enormous number of variants about which "no general statements can be made about the chronology of its various shapes." Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer, *Koyils in the Colamandalam Typology and Development of Early Cola Temples: An Art-Historical Study Based on Geographical Principles*, (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, 1980), 372.

Coomaraswamy expounds that, "[The *kudu* is] used decoratively and placed in series on cornices or similarly used in friezes; but the various architectural forms, complete figures, or heads. . . which appear framed in the niche formed by the window arch prove that the idea of an opening to internal space is always present. . . The best established word is Tamil *kudu*. . . but there seems to be no similar word in Sanskrit; *kudu* means nest, and it applies both to the window as an ornament, and to actual pavilions." In "Indian Architectural Terms," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 48 (1928): 250-275.

a guardian statue from the eleventh century Anping bridge (Fig. 4.33). This reaffirms my suggestion that local Quanzhou artisans participated in the Shiva temple's production.

A panel mimicking a demi-lunette arch (*tōrana*) would have been placed above the lintel. South Indian *tōranas* typically are carved in a demi-lunette shape with low relief sculptures containing decorative motifs or divinities, as previously seen at the Manavalesvara temple in Tiruvelvikkudi (Fig. 3.25). While the Quanzhou *tōranas* clearly are based on south Indian counterparts, their ornament is entirely different. In one of several versions, for example, two devotees, seated on lotus pedestals, surround a *linga* (Fig. 4.34). They are framed by a curved cornice and two columns, which evoke the demi-lunette shape of south Indian precedents. The figures' small scale and postures e.g. *anjali mudra*, differ from usual subject matter filling south Indian *tōranas*, suggesting instead portrait figures on south Indian temple walls, commissioned by devotees, as at the Umamahesvara temple in Konerirajapuram, Kumbakonam (Fig. 4.35).⁸⁴ The small structures on the panel's edges do not have any obvious parallels in south Indian architecture, but might refer to small memorial towers located on the Kaiyuan temple grounds erected to honor the dead (Fig. 4.36). Seen together, the many elements comprising the *tōraṇa* might reflect its Tamil patrons' memories of south Indian architecture, verbally described to a Quanzhou artisan, who executed it while adding his own interpretive angle to the represented architecture.

Pilasters (*Kal*)

⁸⁴ See Padma Kaimal "The Problem of Portraiture in South India, Circa 870-970 A.D.," *Artibus Asiae* 59, no. 1/2 (1999): 59-133 and "The Problem of Portraiture in South India, Circa 970-1000 A.D.," *Artibus Asiae* 60, no. 1 (2000): 139-79; Vidya Dehejia, "The Very Idea of a Portrait," *Ars Orientalis* 28 (1998): 40-48.

Based on the sizeable quantity of pilaster carvings, I surmise there were six pilasters on each of the sanctum's sides. The Ainnurruvar patronized Devasvamyudaiyar temple from Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli District (studied in Chapter Three), dated approximately to the early eleventh century, demonstrates this format (Figs. 3.31 and 4.37) as well as the decorative components of a typical south Indian pilaster. These are:

The *ōma*, a square-shaped pilaster base, adorned by a floral roundel (Fig. 4.38). Its upper corners have a triple ridge and a *nagabandha*, a snake's hood, which appears on many south Indian temples dating from the late twelfth century onwards.

The *mālāsthāna*, appearing higher on the pilaster, perfectly reproduces south Indian forms (Fig 4.39).

A small pot shaped carving (*laśuna*) with high-relief lotus petals was placed above the *mālāsthāna* (Fig 4.40). Many of the pots are carved to three quarters, indicating that they were placed at either end of the central projection (*bhadra*), or the wall's exterior corners. The pot is incised with a heart-shaped pattern that is observed at several sites in south India, including southern Karnataka. The textured floral ornament appears on numerous Quanzhou monuments, including Islamic graves.

A square, cushion shape (*ghaṭa*) crowns the pilasters (Fig. 4.41). This element is attached to a projecting square abacus (*palagai*), the bottom of which is carved with lotus petals (*idal*). These components form the base for the bracket capitals (*pōtigai*), which have pendant lotuses sprouting from their ends (*puṣpapōtigai*) (Fig. 4.42). A rectangle carved underneath the capital contains a subtle detail from south Indian precedents--a dowel (*virakaṇṭha*) that mimics earlier wooden structures in India.

The capitals have five variants, which would have been placed at different positions atop the temple's pillars or pilasters. The first type is carved in the round, with two large tenons positioned at 180 degrees. This would have been located in the *ardhamañḍapa* interior (Fig. 4.43). The second type is a triangular stone block with four tenons, two of which are carved in the round and project from the block at a ninety-degree angle. The other two were carved in high relief. This would have formed the temple exterior's corner (Fig. 4.44). The third type is a rectangular stone block with one projecting tenon, carved in the round, positioned at a perpendicular angle. It has two additional tenons, carved in low relief at either side. This would have occupied the *garbagrha*'s exterior wall (Fig. 4.45). The fourth type is a rectangular stone block with two high-relief tenons. This would have been along the *ardhamañḍapa* exterior (Fig. 4.42). Lastly, the fifth type is a rectangular block with a single projecting tenon, carved in the round. This was placed above pilasters near the temple's entrances (Fig. 4.46).

Finally, a cornice (*kapōta*) surmounted the wall. Two variants occupied different positions on the temple: type 1 (Figs. 4.47 and 4.48) has an edge decorated with lotus petal outlines and a large head with the distinctive physiognomy observed earlier (bulging eyes, triangular nose, pointy ears). The bottom portion contains lotus petal ornament, which consists of a flat, u-shaped line projecting from the stone surface in low relief. This ornament is identical to the *muqarnas* (Islamic decorative design used in *iwans* i.e. portals) in Quanzhou's Ashab mosque (*Shengyou si*), suggesting that the same artisans worked on both monuments (Fig. 4.49 and 4.50).⁸⁵ It was on the *garbagriha*

⁸⁵ Scholars believe there were at least six mosques in medieval Quanzhou, although the Ashab mosque (Shengyousi) alone survives, and is believed to be the city's first. Two inscriptions record that the gate tower was built in 1009-10, and reconstructed in 1310-11. The mosque also attests to Quanzhou's multicultural composition: several tombstones found within the mosque identify worshipers from Tabriz,

exterior. Type 2 has a much longer depth than the first *kapōta* type, no face, and has three grooves on its underside (Fig 4.51). It was on the front porch (*mukhamandapa*), creating an overhang that provided shade.

An “L-shaped” block, the ends of which bear faces, was placed above the cornice at the temple’s exterior corners, comprising part of a parapet (Fig. 4.52).

Superstructure

Save for a single *stūpikā* (finial), nothing remains of the superstructure, suggesting that it was made of brick (Fig. 4.53). This replicated building practices in contemporaneous south India.

A stone bull (*nandi*), appearing in Wu Weliang’s 2005 publication (current location unknown), might have adorned the superstructure (4.54).

Front Porch and Interior

A single fragment of a stairway banister (*hastihasta*), from one of the temple’s two axial staircases, emulates South Indian prototypes, featuring a blossoming lotus sprouting next to the coiled end of the banister (Fig. 4.55).

Wu Wenliang’s publication contains an image of a rearing lion (Fig. 4.56), inscribed with Chinese characters, reading “rear east six.” This would have been located on the *ardhamanḍapa*’s exterior, and given the temple an impression of a festival chariot, as was typical of the period. In the previous chapter we saw examples of chariot type

Khorazm, and Nabrus; one individual was the son of the Persian prime minister. Howayda Harithy and Sylvia Shorto suggest that the mosque’s interior, especially the “gravestone-like” pointed arches containing inscriptions, reproduce 13th-14th century Indo-Islamic models. I will investigate this point in future work. For translations of foundation inscriptions, see Clark, “Muslims and Hindus,” 62.

temples at the Amrighatesvara temple at Melakadambur, Cuddalore District (Fig. 3.60) and at the Somanatesvarar temple in Pazhaiyarai, Tanjavur District (Fig. 3.61).⁸⁶ The presence of the rearing lion at Quanzhou suggests that the temple's form also resembled a chariot; furthermore, the Chinese characters indicating the lion's placement in the temple communicate that Chinese-speaking laborers assembled the temple. The appearance of a lion as opposed to a horse might be yet another reference to the identity of its artisans, who would have been familiar with carving lions, which were frequently represented in local art; however, the previous chapter has noted that in Tamil country riders also were represented astride lions, as seen at the Tiruvalisvarar of Valikandapuram and the Somanatharsvami at Palaiyarai (Figs. 3.43 and 3.44).

A window screen (*jāla*) fragment is carved with small floral designs, and was located in the hall leading to the central sanctum. The fragment has clean, semi-circular joins, showing that the artisans carved portions of the screen separately, rather than in a single piece (Fig. 4.63).

Two doorframes are carved with elaborate lotus petals, stylistically paralleling examples from southern Karnataka, and with two images: one of a monkey (Fig. 4.64), and the other of a man clad in a dhoti, carrying a club (Figs. 4.65 and 4.66). Door guardians in Shiva temples usually hold clubs because they are one of Shiva's attributes; however, the Quanzhou example is much less ferocious in appearance than these precedents. The monkey's presence on the door also departs from south Indian prototypes. Once again, it seems that this reflects an instance where donors requested

⁸⁶ Wu notes that the Quanzhou rearing lion's underside is carved with an erect phallus; representation of such "sensuous" details was uncommon in Chinese sculpture, and certainly borrows from south Indian archetypes, where the erect phallus is almost invariably present.

specific icons to be represented within the temple, which departed from normative south Indian models, possibly representing lapses in memory, or the reliance on local artisans to translate vague and unfamiliar ideas into sculptural form.

Scholars have paid considerable attention to the two remarkable pillars in Quanzhou's Kaiyuan temple because of their sculptural richness and their prominent position in the temple (Fig. 4.5).⁸⁷ The *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar is unprecedented in Chinese architecture, but it was used extensively during the eleventh through fourteenth centuries in Tamil region temple *maṇḍapas* (see Chapter Three). They are chamfered to a sixteen-sided form and have three cubical blocks bearing medallions, which contain six figurative forms derived from both Chinese and Indian precedents and six floral motifs, a total of twenty-four images. There are six figurative motifs on each pillar, which illustrate both Shaivite and Vaishnavite deities and myths; thus, their organization does not appear to adhere to any sectarian logic.

One pillar contains: Narasimha, Vishnu's man-lion avatar, who tears the entrails of the evil king, Hiryanakashipu, with two hands, and holds discus, conch, and other attributes in seven others (Fig. 4.61); a young Krishna, who pulls down a tree by using the heavy mortar which has been tied to his body—according to legend, Krishna's mother tied the weight to her son to prevent him from crawling away (Fig. 4.62); a newly identified scene, which depicts an immortal (*xian*) in the background, and deer eating fungus in the foreground (Fig. 4.63);⁸⁸ a chasing phoenix motif, made popular in the

⁸⁷ See Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton"; T.N. Subramaniam, "A Tamil Colony in Medieval China"; John Guy, "The Lost Temples of Nagapattinam and Quanzhou" and "Tamil Merchant Guilds and the Quanzhou Trade"; and Har Prasad Ray, "Indian Settlements in Medieval China" (all op cit.).

⁸⁸ I thank Rob Linrothe for this identification.

Yuan period (4.64);⁸⁹ Krishna playing the flute alongside the multi-headed snake, Kaliya (Fig. 4.65); and Krishna seated in a tree above seven cowmaids (*gopis*) whose clothes he has stolen (Fig. 4.66).

The second pillar contains: Indian wrestlers whose limbs are entwined in a circle (Fig. 4.67); Vishnu, who holds icons of a conch and discus (*chakra*) in his upper hands, and a club (*gada*) in his lower left hand, seated with his two wives, Lakshmi and Bhudevi, on a lotus pedestal (Fig. 4.68); Vishnu seated on the back of an anthropomorphic, winged Garuda (Vishnu's associated eagle mount), holding a conch and discus in two hands, with his lower right and left hands in *abhaya* (reassuring) and *varada* (benign) poses (Fig. 4.69); the Gajendramoksha Purana, in which an elephant cries to Vishnu after being attacked by a crocodile (Fig. 4.70); a standing Bhairava (ferocious form of Shiva) with flowing dreadlocks, who holds a serpent and begging bowl in his left two hands, and a drum and trident in his right (Fig. 4.71); and two lions chasing balls (Fig. 4.72).⁹⁰

The medallions' iconography appears immune to cultural hierarchy: Indian and Chinese subjects are displayed side by side, and in nearly equal number. Their execution shows that the artisans were trained in carving Chinese subjects, but not Indian iconography. Consider the Chinese chasing phoenix pattern that appears both on the Kaiyuan Temple column and on a Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) silver box, taken from a tomb in nearby Fuzhou (Fig. 4.73). On both, the phoenix is balanced and symmetrical; its wings are positioned seamlessly against a border and its feathers are

⁸⁹ Jessica Rawson suggests that this motif came into fruition during the Yuan dynasty. Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon*, London: British Museum Publications, 1984 and James C. Watt, *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*, (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1997).

⁹⁰ The numerous publications that identify the medallions' subjects (with the exception of the newly identified "xian and deer" scene, fig. 4.72) include: T. N. Subramaniam's

sharply defined. By contrast, the image of Krishna felling the Arjuna tree, new to Chinese artisans, located on a medallion of the temple's Indic column (Fig. 4.69), lacks the same degree of symmetrical organization: the image of Krishna exists within blank, unornamented space.

Comparing Indian images found on the Kaiyuan Temple columns to the same images on temples in India further accentuates the former's lack of precision. The medallion depicting wrestlers (Fig. 4.67) bears a striking resemblance to a bas-relief of wrestlers from the mid-twelfth century temple of Darasuram (Fig. 4.74). In both, the wrestlers' bodies form a circle and the limbs cross one other at the central point; however, in the Darasuram carving, the bodies are carved precisely, in medium relief within a continuous, fluid circle, while the Quanzhou wrestlers appear in low relief, crammed inside the border, struggling awkwardly against the medallion's confines. By contrast, the medallion depicting lions chasing balls displays an elegant design with a similar circular format and reflects the artisan's familiarity with this Chinese motif. Still other medallions show that certain Quanzhou artisans inserted a familiar design when faced with unfamiliar iconography: a close inspection of the medallion containing the Gajendra moksha purana, in which the elephant king calls upon Vishnu to save him from the jaws of a ferocious crocodile (Fig. 4.70), reveals a sinicized dragon's head in place of the crocodile's (Fig. 4.75).

I agree with Ananda Coomaraswamy's suggestion that the Indic subjects' linear execution suggests that the designs might have been transmitted by line drawings, made or brought by Tamil merchant patrons, which then were given to Quanzhou artisans as

instructive material.⁹¹ We know that this was common practice for traveling artists in other parts of South Asia. In Nepal, for example, artists sketchbooks and model books from the fifteenth century and later reveal the artists' firsthand knowledge of famous shrines in India. As Pratapaditya Pal has suggested, it is "not unlikely that Nepali priests visiting India brought back similar sketchbooks [prior to the fifteenth century]."⁹² The precise rendering of images contained in sketchbooks might explain the accurate iconography of the Narasimha medallion, which follows Tamil region conventions in depicting Vishnu's avatar with five arms on his proper right and four on his proper left. Compare the Quanzhou medallion of Narasimha disemboweling Hiryanapakshu (4.61) with a bas-relief of the same subject (Fig. 4.76), used as a facing stone on the porch of a shrine located outside the main *gōpura* of the Somanatharsvami temple at Palaiyarai in Kumbakonam (Fig. 4.77). This panel is particularly large, and shows a synoptic narrative of Hiryanapakshu's demise in which the evil king is depicted thrice in one panel: twice at either side of Narasimha, and once in an impossible "u-shape" as he is disemboweled on the deity's lap. Dancing female devotees surround the main event, and Hiryanapakshu's flexible position is mimicked by an unidentified figure in the upper righthand corner. While the Quanzhou medallion does not contain the same abundance of narrative elements, it does portray an identical number of arms in a similar arrangement. As in the Somanatharsvami version, the Quanzhou Narasimha's hands hold conch and discus, with a fifth arm appearing as a tiny appendage at the proper right,

⁹¹ He also suggests that the pillars might copy wooden originals. Coomaraswamy, "Hindu Sculptures at Zayton," 10.

⁹² Pratapaditya Pal, *Buddhist Book Illuminations*, (New York: Ravi Kumar Publishers; Husrtpierpoint, England: Richard Lyon-Chimera Books, 1988).

holding what appears to be a drum, while the two frontal arms bend at nearly right angles, plunging into the king's innards. Similarly, the Quanzhou medallion containing Vishnu mounted on his eagle, Garuda (4.69), displays iconography reliant upon south Indian precedents, albeit in a different idiom, seen through a comparison with an image of Garuda from a *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar located in the *nandi* pavilion (bull mount of Shiva) of the Sivayoganathasvami temple of Tiruvisanallur village in Kumbakonam (Figs. 4.78 and 4.79). The two images are immediately distinguishable from one another by virtue of the fact that the Tiruvisanallur artisan uses the entirety of the stone surface to show Garuda in his human form, in contrast to the Quanzhou version, which shows Vishnu and Garuda relegated to the center of the square block within a circular frame. These two different depictions probably reiterate the latter artisan's reliance upon a line-drawing model for his design and unfamiliarity with the subject matter. The two representations show Garuda in nearly identical pose in which he is kneeling with his right leg placed before the left and head tilted slightly to the right. He is clad in a simple *dhoti* and adorned with massive cylindrical earrings. Meanwhile his arms are raised skywards, alluding to his master Vishnu's rightful place on his back, with feathered wings framing his body.

The style of some of the medallions suggests that Chinese artisans might have relied on south Indian bronzes to represent unfamiliar Indic iconography. Bronzes were not only necessary for the functioning of a Shiva temple, but they were also portable, and would have been logical references for Chinese artisans. Several of the medallions on the Kaiyuan temple's Indic pillars portray Hindu gods as static images, seated or standing on lotus pedestals and holding implements that would have also distinguished their three-dimensional bronze counterparts. In particular, the images of Vishnu enthroned with

Lakshmi and Bhudevi (Fig. 4.68) and Shiva Bhairava (Fig. 4.71) seem to have been copied from bronze images. A comparison with an early tenth century bronze of a seated Vishnu from the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu demonstrates the formal similarities between the two images (Fig. 4.80). Vishnu is seated on a throne/lotus pedestal in the *lalitasana* posture of ease, his two rear hands holding his attributes of discus and conch, with a triple strand of sacred thread wrapped across his chest. Although his two wives, Lakshmi and Bhudevi, are absent in the Kongu bronze, they might have been executed as two separate bronze sculptures to flank the god. The Quanzhou medallion's detailed depiction of the throne/lotus pedestal precisely replicates those from contemporary south India, where they appear primarily beneath iconic images of gods, executed either in bronze, or in stone—the latter version was installed in niches on the temple walls. The static poses of the Quanzhou Vishnu and Bhairava images differ from the majority of those sculpted on citrakhandā pillars in the Tamil region, which tend to depict gods in more active postures. For example, a pillar in the *mukhamandpa* at the Sivakozhantanesvarar temple at Tirusattimutram, Kumbakonam, depicts Shiva in a frenzied state, dancing atop a corpse and accompanied by an linga-bearing attendant (probably the saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar) (Fig. 4.81) Shiva's fluid dance, illustrated by his bent knees and raised arms, conveys dynamic movement in dramatic contrast to the Quanzhou pillars' iconic figures.

Based on the above analysis of individual carvings, I propose a reconstruction of the original temple form illustrated by the following drawings (Figs. 4.82 and 4.83). The extant carvings suggest a Dravida style temple composed of a square sanctuary

(*garbagṛha*), attached flat-roofed rectangular hall (*ardhamanḍapa*), and porch (*mukhamanḍapa*), mounted by two axial staircases. From plinth to cornice, the structure measured approximately 16.5 feet in height.⁹³ Pillars on all three sides of the open porch supported its stone roof. The temple's interior would have been lit by faint natural light filtering through stone screen windows (*jāla*) located in the nexus between the *ardhamanḍapa* and *garbagṛha*. Seen from the exterior, the *garbagṛha* was surmounted by a pyramidal superstructure (not extant and therefore indicated by a dashed line) built of bricks and plaster, and crowned by a tall stone finial (*stūpīka*).

LIVES OF INDIC OBJECTS IN QUANZHOU

The above analysis should make clear that the Shiva temple in Quanzhou represents a confluence of artistic traditions, ideas, and people. Its form recalls south Indian precedents, as in the faithful use of architectural components such as the *pattika* with a carefully executed cyma recta moulding underneath it and the *hastihasta* staircase banister with a blossoming lotus; the temple also incorporated distinctly Chinese iconography, such as the medallions containing chasing phoenixes and lions chasing balls. Its form also contains amalgamations of the two artistic traditions, such as the faces ornamenting *kudu* and *kapōta* that have been rendered with the distinct physiognomy of Quanzhou bridge guardians, or the Gajendramoksha medallion, which contains a crocodile with the face of a Chinese dragon. Moreover, the Quanzhou Shiva temple also showcases unique artistic innovations that are not easily categorized; for example, the

⁹³ It is easier to determine height than width, since we lack many of the carvings that would have comprised the temple's exterior.

tōrana arch that seemingly melds representations of sincized architecture with novel depictions of devotees worshipping *lingas*.

Moving beyond the Shiva temple's "original" form (as it was conceived by its patrons in 1281), we can begin to trace its subsequent transformations in meaning to successive audiences. Select monuments in Quanzhou, which postdate the Shiva temple's destruction, suggest that the temple's aesthetic continued to impact Quanzhou, visual culture even after its demise in the late fourteenth century. As we have already seen, many Quanzhou monuments reused the Shiva temple's spolia, attaching new significations to the material during the constructive process. Studying the manifold reinterpretation of Indic objects informs us about the viewing communities who reinterpreted and reconstructed them. Richard Davis, in studying the 'lives' of Indic objects, has convincingly demonstrated that their "'meaning' emerges through the relationship of image with viewer, who brings his or her community's own interpretive strategies to bear within the encounter."⁹⁴ Extant Indic material in Quanzhou, while fragmentary, does provide insight into the long-term effects of Indo-Chinese maritime contact on Quanzhou society.

The plinth and pillars in the Kaiyuan temple recall the original Shiva temple's form in their placement and prominence. We have already seen how the plinth consists of broken carvings that painstakingly follow a specific order of lions, human-headed lions, and pillars—an order that must refer back to the original Shiva temple, which is corroborated by parallel examples in south India. We might hypothesize that the close approximation of the reused Indic carvings to the Shiva temple's original form is an

⁹⁴ Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 9.

instance of symbolic continuity, in which the Kaiyuan temple's patrons attempted to connect with foreign populations after the Shiva temple's demise. Also, we note that the Kaiyuan temple pillar medallion bearing South Indian wrestlers has been altered slightly (Fig. 4.67). A fragmentary pillar in the Quanzhou Maritime Museum bears another image of South Indian wrestlers surrounding two small scepters (Fig. 4.84); these scepters, which symbolize Shiva's power, are absent in the Kaiyuan temple version. Small indentations on the medallion in the Kaiyuan temple mark the scepters' original locations, and indicate they were removed carefully. We cannot understand why the scepters needed to be censored while other more direct expressions of Hindu divinities were preserved intact, however the destructive act in itself evidences recognition of Hindu iconography. In a similar example, the seated saint has been effaced in the Tirumular/Candesvara bas-relief (Fig. 4.29), a conscious attempt to change the object's religious connotations.

Jennifer Purtle has suggested that Quanzhou's stone architecture might have resulted entirely from Indian artisans transporting architectural technologies from India to southern China.⁹⁵ Except for Quanzhou, stone construction is anomalous to China, and Purtle notes several monuments in Quanzhou that evince Indian style. These include the "full and plastic" sculptural reliefs that adorn the Kaiyuan temple's two stone pagodas' bases, stone brackets that imitate wood in the Mito Yan Buddhist temple (1364), as well as wooden *apsara* (winged angel) brackets, which were installed in the Kaiyuan temple's main hall during the early Ming period renovation. These images might suggest a long

⁹⁵ Jennifer Purtle, unpublished paper given at the University of Minnesota on panel, "India in China/China in India," September 2008.

term “Indian presence” in Quanzhou, many aspects of which were assimilated gradually in a process beginning in the eighth century, when Quanzhou was steeped in Buddhism.⁹⁶

While we lack textual evidence to support these observations, Quanzhou’s historiographical silence on the Tamil merchant community might result from its eventual incorporation and assimilation into the city. A final example—a tall stone column, which still stands in the city’s northern section—illustrates this point (Fig. 4.85). Possessing a wide base that tapers to a rounded tip, it is unparalleled in local iconography, and several scholars have identified it as a *linga*.⁹⁷ The “*linga*” differs greatly from south Indian counterparts, which tend to be shorter and more cylindrical; however written evidence from Quanzhou suggests that historical populations identified the object as taboo because of its erotic associations, perhaps demonstrating recognition of its Shaivite iconography. The *Gazeteer of Jinjiang* refers to the object as the “stone bamboo shoot” (*shixun*), and records that in 1011, a local magistrate, Gao Huilian, broke it in two because of its shameful appearance, and that a local sheriff repaired it between 1465-1487. If Gao Huilian recognized the *shixun* as representing a phallic aspect of the god Shiva, this might have provided the impetus for declaring it shameful enough to destroy: at a time when Indic populations were starting to become integrated into Quanzhou society, this decision would have embodied the cultural schizophreniza characterizing

⁹⁶ Purtle writes that the city’s earlier name was *Citong*, which a seventeenth century Quanzhou gazetteer attributes to the planting of *Citong* trees, imported from India, e.g. *Erythrina indica*, in the city walls at the time of its foundation.

Another oft remarked Indic connection in Quanzhou is a bas-relief of a monkey, which appears on one of the Kaiyuan temple’s pagodas and identified as Sun Wukong. Many scholars believe that the Hindu monkey god, Hanuman, was the inspiration for the Sun Wukong, the monkey assistant to Hsuan Tsang. For a summary of the debates, see Victor Mair, “Suen Wu-kung or Hanumat?: The Progress of a Scholarly Debate,” In *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology*, (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), 659-752.

⁹⁷ Clark, “Muslims and Hindus in Quanzhou,” 57.

attitudes towards foreignness, that, as this chapter has described, was common to medieval Quanzhou. When the local sheriff repaired it almost five centuries later, the Shiva worshipping populations were long gone, but their material culture had become a part of the city's most important institutions and was conceptually integrated into its permanent fabric. That the "stone bamboo shoot" could elicit enough passion and disdain to inspire destruction and enough respect to inspire reconstruction, suggests an emergent pattern of reclaiming and transforming Indic iconography in Quanzhou. Though its peculiar form no longer registers immediately as a Shiva *linga*, its appearance and name indexes the long lifespan of Indic objects in Quanzhou.

CONCLUSION

The material surveyed in this dissertation offers a window into the experience of premodern south Indian merchants, whose material and literary production communicate identities that went beyond their commonly recognized roles as professional movers of commodities. Undoubtedly, these commodities were vital to their livelihoods, evidenced by long lists of exotic wares and unified decisions regarding their taxation recorded in inscriptions. The demand for these items encouraged the growth of complex trade networks facilitating their import and export. This allowed certain individuals to achieve the kind of elite status and power that eventually destabilized monarchies like that of the Cholas.

Merchants accomplished this through actual and imagined movement. In Chapter One, I outlined the historical, seasonal, and geographic factors that impacted the functional networks of transregional merchant organizations like the Ainnurruvar. Using inscriptions, I documented how Ainnurruvar branches fanned out across south India and the Indian Ocean through mapping the distribution of inscriptions over time, and by identifying activity centers of mercantile patronage. In analyzing the content of the inscriptions, I deduced that wherever the Ainnurruvar went, they developed ingenuous systems to project a transregional identity and authority, even as local branches remained largely distinct. This strategy was extremely successful, and as a result, the thirteenth century marked an era of prosperity for merchants, with many achieving lordly status. Attesting to this fact are many inscriptions recording that merchants sometimes accumulated enough material resources to enjoy significant power in other vocations,

including judicial and banking positions. A measure of this success also is evidenced by their successful integration into locales as far away as China.

Movement operates on another more conceptual level, however. In Chapter Two I analyzed the Ainnurruvar *praśasti*, and argued that the text, in claiming that the members received power from infinite points of origin, emphasized movement in order to shore up the group's power and authority. The Ainnurruvar *praśasti*, while varying in content in individual inscriptions, retains similar format, imagery, and phraseology across a wide range of linguistic and geographical contexts. However, the geographic area covered by the *praśasti* is so vast that it is impossible for the groups' members to have been functionally connected. Rather, the assertion of unity was in itself generative of power and authority. I have also argued that the Ainnurruvar's assertion of unity was extremely capacious, and in fact subtly invited non-members to join the organization, or at least catered to their tastes. I have shown how the texts and formats of these proclamations, especially merchant stones, incorporate and modify pre-established visual systems from elite and non-elite cultural realms. I suggest that in employing these systems, the Ainnurruvar were casting their nets as wide as they could, using recognizable iconography to communicate with a wide public base. This was one of the Ainnurruvar's main strategies of generating a coherent mercantile identity: by incorporating rather than inventing its constituents (actual merchant groups, literary conventions, and visual emblems, etc.), the Ainnurruvar integrated themselves into diverse contexts. When appearing on a merchant stone, a representation of a scepter was not just a scepter: it was a multivalent icon and referent pointing to recognizable cultural realms, including the royal court, the lord Shiva, and their partnership with non-elite

agricultural organizations. The transfer of these symbols across a large geographic area instantiate the polycentric networks that created a collective identity among members of the wider mercantile community.

Building a collective identity continued in the merchant organization's commitment to commissioning temples in the Dravida style. In Chapter Three I provided an overview of the Dravida style and analyzed several temples in the Tamil and Karnataka regions that were important Ainnurruvar activity centers. That the Dravida architectural models also were important in their own rite within the Tamil region is indicated by repetitive form and extensive documentation of Dravida architectural vocabulary in inscriptions across a large geographic region and time span. In several instances, inspection of temples commissioned by Tamil speaking merchants outside of the Tamil region reveals the handiwork of artisans who clearly were unfamiliar with the Dravida style (such as at Aihole and Mudigonda). Our conclusion is that the style stood as a marker of regional identity. Visual expressions of unity were thus integral to the self-fashioning of merchant associations.

In Chapter Four, this is seen through the case study of a Shiva temple in Quanzhou, southern China. Before the circulation of easily reproducible media like print or film, it appears that architecture comprised an important element of the connective tissue binding merchant patrons to one another within different temporal and geographical zones. As such, its built form reveals formal transformations to fit representational codes that would have been recognizable to Quanzhou artisans and citizens, as it does a reliance on Dravida models directly connected with the Tamil region. In a sense, the merchants' manipulation of visual codes as a form of self-fashioning gives

voice to Henri Lefebvre's conception of "representational spaces," which describes "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of its 'inhabitants' and 'users.'" These spaces are articulated through the "more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs."¹ What gave these 'systems of non-verbal symbols and signs' coherency and poignancy was their effectiveness in constructing community across disparate locales. What work these systems did for Tamil merchants across the entirety of their Indian Ocean circuit remains to be seen.

Recently, Sheldon Pollock has proposed the concept of a "Sanskrit cosmopolis, a far-flung realm of shared aesthetics, political discourse, and religious knowledge" charts a multi-centered political system, connected by a complex of interlocking networks that extended beyond India's geographic borders.² I ask if we can interpret architectural form and content similarly, to view the Dravida style carvings and Tamil script as instrumental to the forging of a cosmopolitan Tamil merchant identity in the Indian Ocean circuit. It is almost certain that these representational practices continued outside of India's geographic boundaries. As noted in this dissertation's introduction, several Tamil language inscriptions, often accompanied by Tamil-Dravida style architectural carvings (e.g. Nakhon si Thammarat Fig. 0.2) appear outside of India, clearly a testament of Tamil merchant trade diasporas circulating along the Indian Ocean littoral in this time. Future research of these sites may enable me to confirm my hypothesis that building in the Dravida style allowed Tamil merchants to enunciate cosmopolitan identities in many

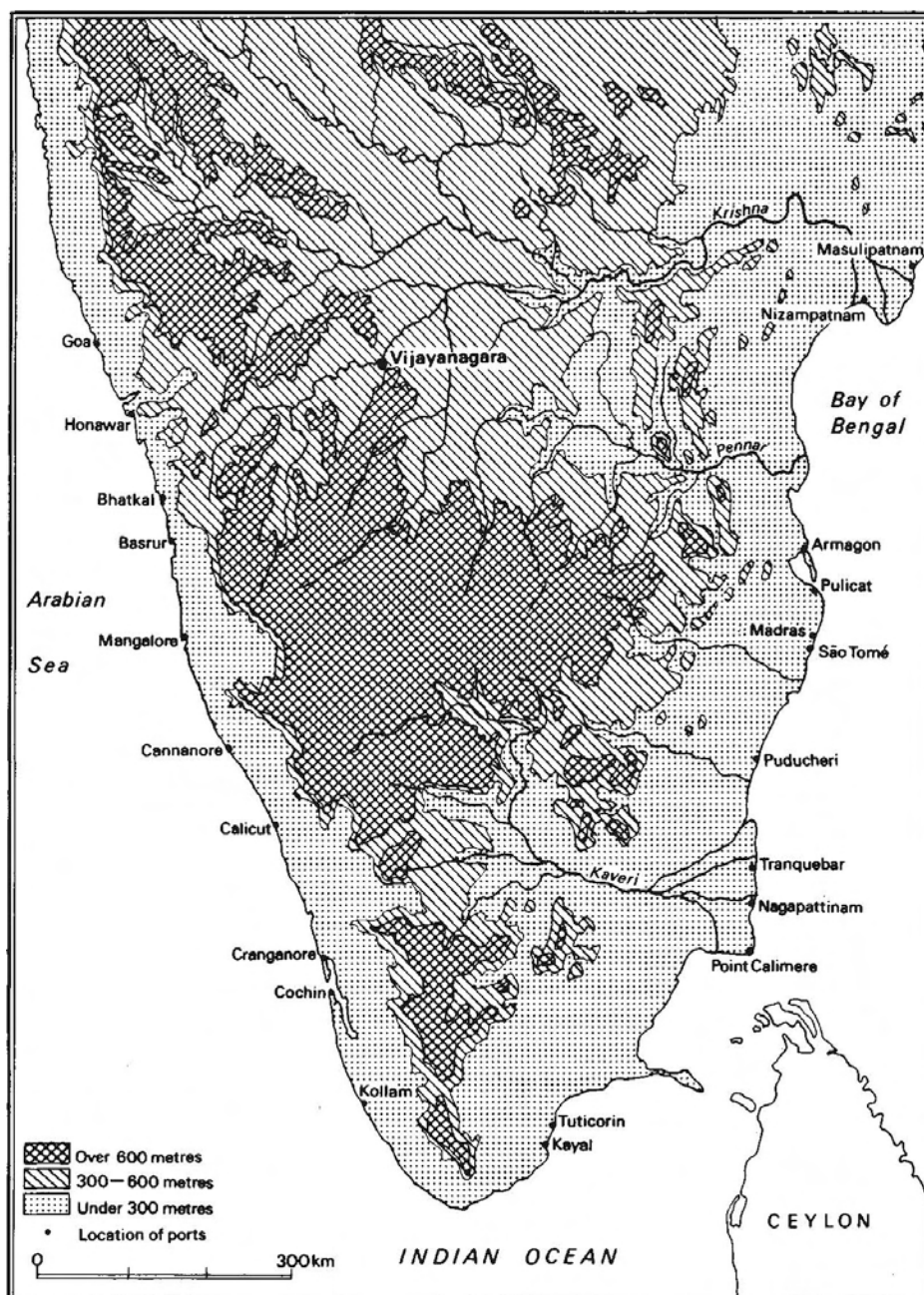
¹ Quoted in Finbarr Flood's *Objects of Translation*, 253. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell), 39, 110.

² Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13.

locations across the Indian Ocean circuit. Future research might also seek to locate any merchant stones outside of India; although none came to my attention in China, it seems likely that they would have existed at other merchant settlements.

By focusing on a patron group whose professional livelihood depended on actual mobility of goods and people, I have shown a vision of premodern India that contradicts orientalist narratives of India's inhabitants tied to the static village unit and constrained by eternal essences of caste and divine kingship. Transregional merchant organizations fostered the creation of dynamic material and cultural pathways of exchange, which connected and continually transformed their landscape. They also entered the realm of royal courts through demand for exotic merchandise. Inspecting architectural commissions demonstrates the likelihood of artisans affiliated with merchant associations circulating through pathways nurtured by commercial partnerships. In other words, the available material culture suggests that merchants created their own fortunes, and were not so constrained by pregiven constructs like caste. Rather, it was through the literal movement of material resources that merchants elevated their own status and authority.

Most importantly, this dissertation demonstrates the enormous importance of considering visual sources in constructing a vision of the past. If we remove the constraints of more recent historiographic practices that identify inscriptions as the only authoritative sources of knowledge and expand our scope to include the enormous range of visual artifacts and monuments, we see that they are complementary sources of knowledge. Studying them allows us to come closer to recovering the otherwise unimaginable desires and aspirations of those who made and viewed them in the remote past.

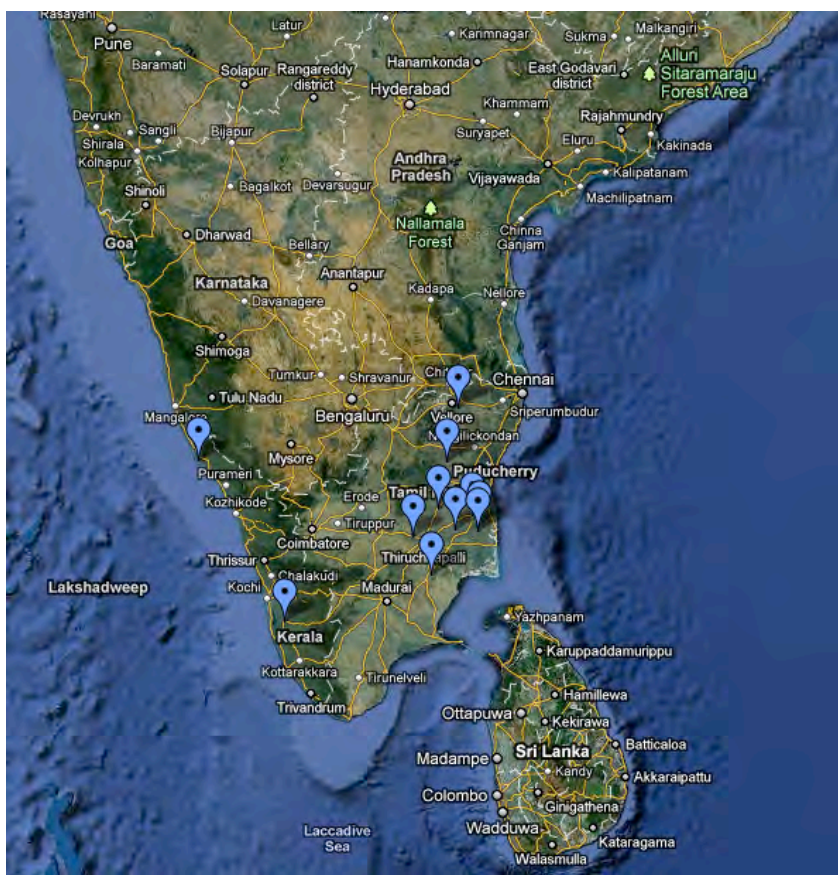


Map 2 Southern India Physical Features and Ports

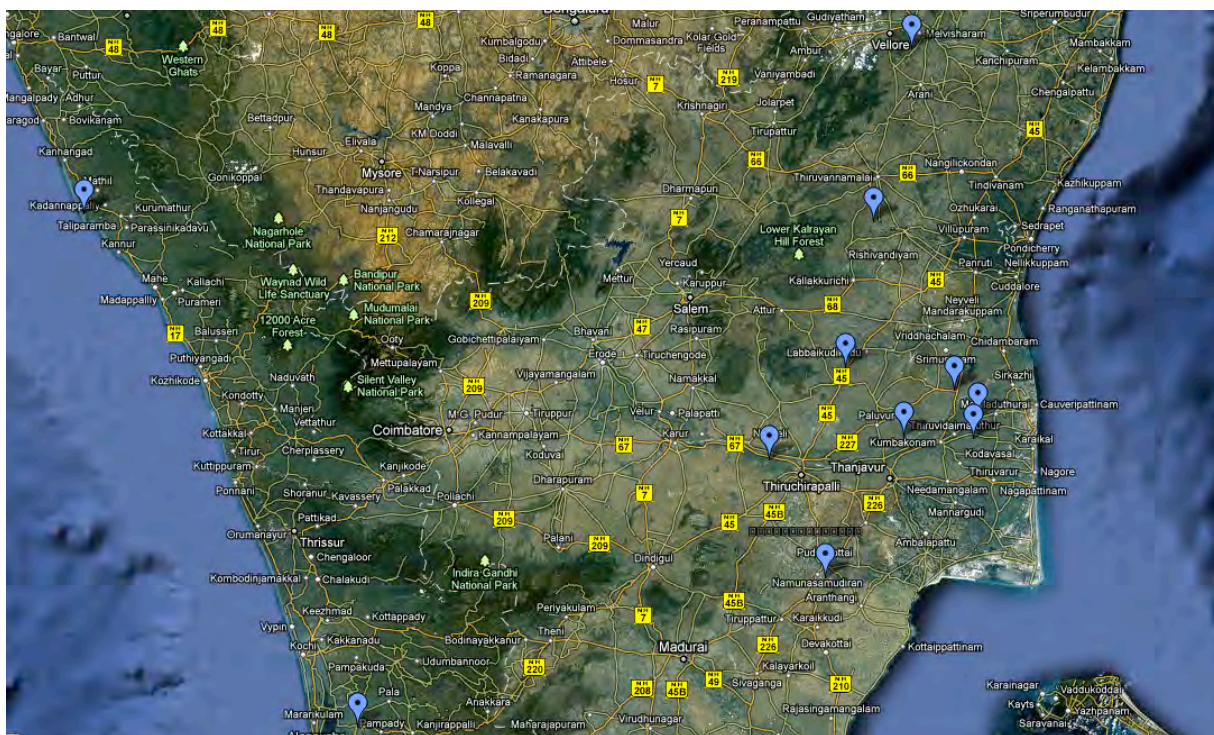
After Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce in Southern India, 1500-1650*, 13.



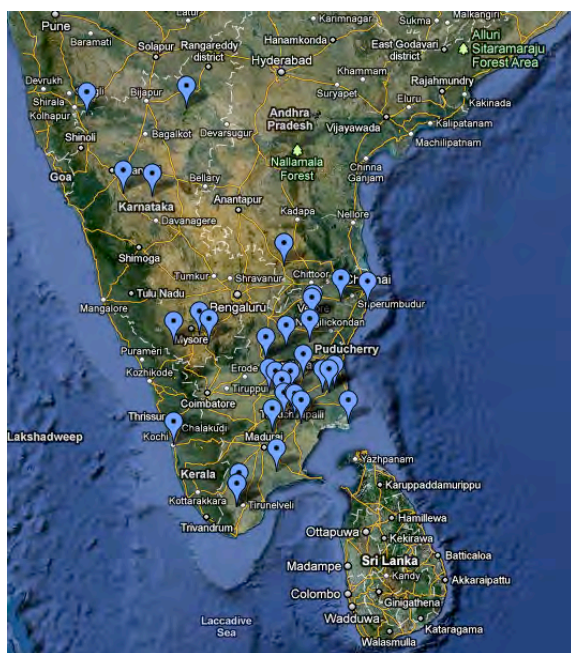
Map 5 Tamil Nadu Districts
 After Travel Corporation India, www.tcindia.com/maps/tamilnadu.html.gif



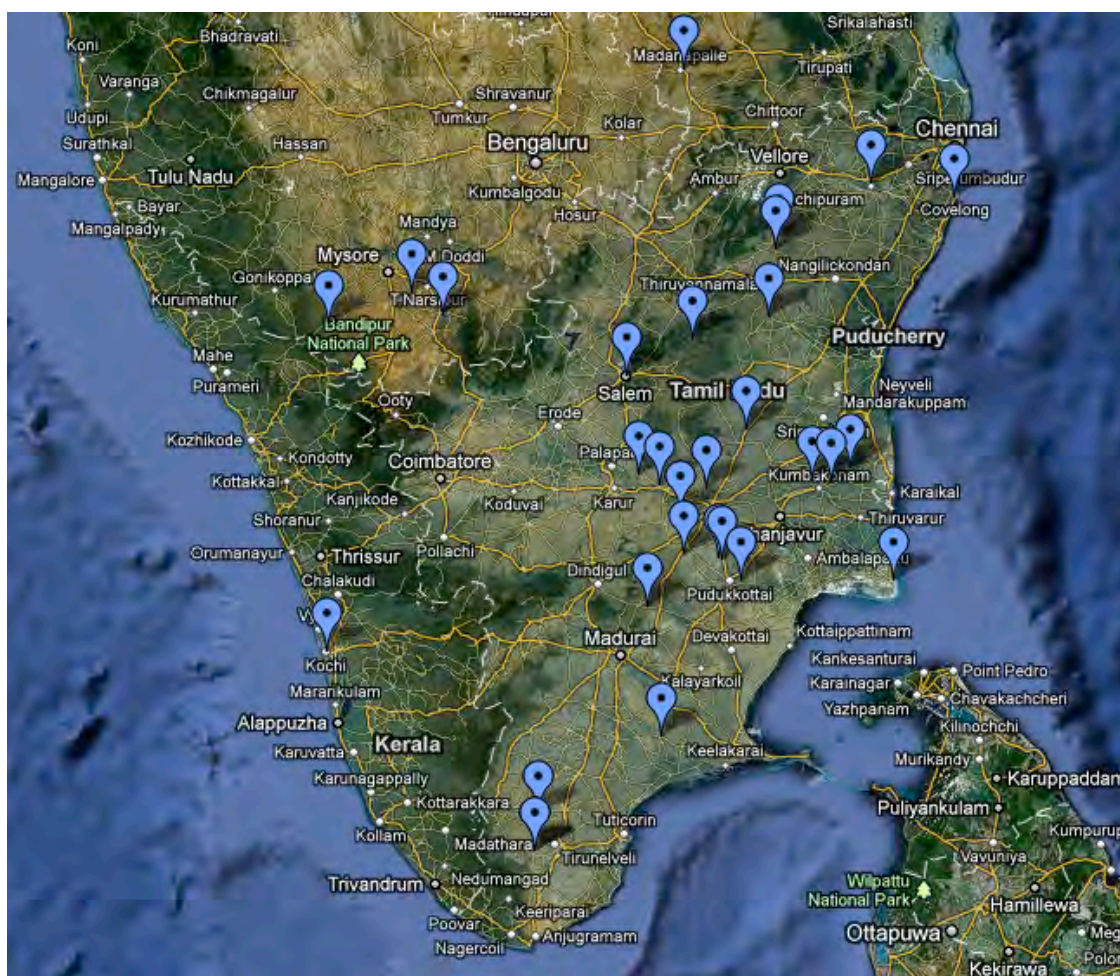
Map 6 Period 1 (849-985): Overview



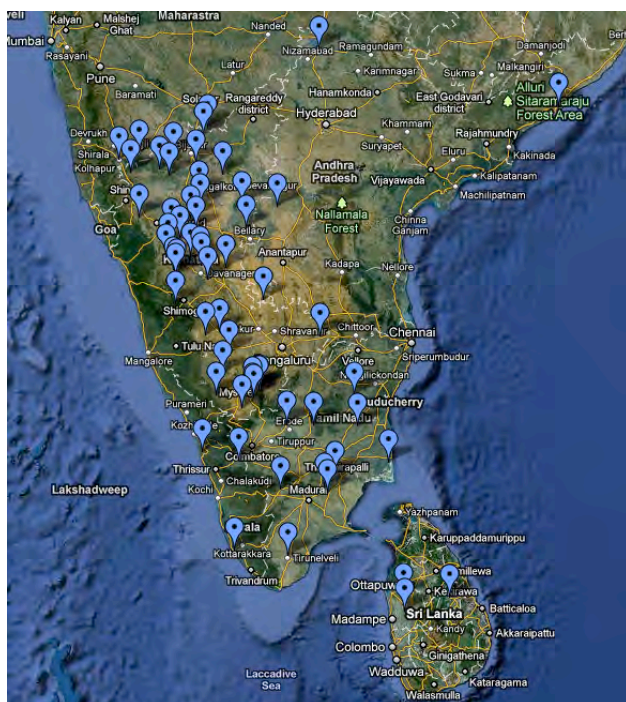
Map 7 Period 1: Tamil Nadu detail



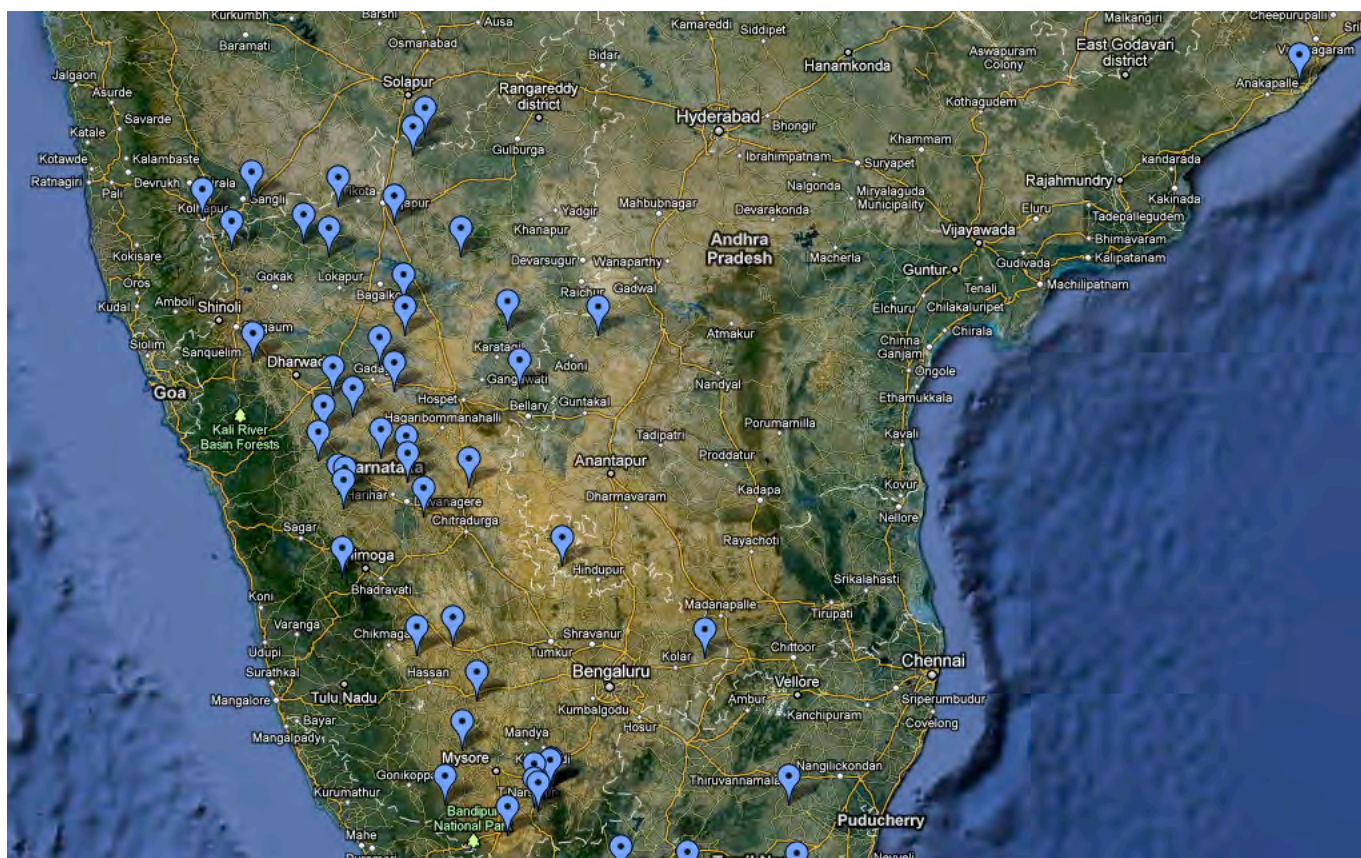
Map 8 Period 2 (985-1070): Overview



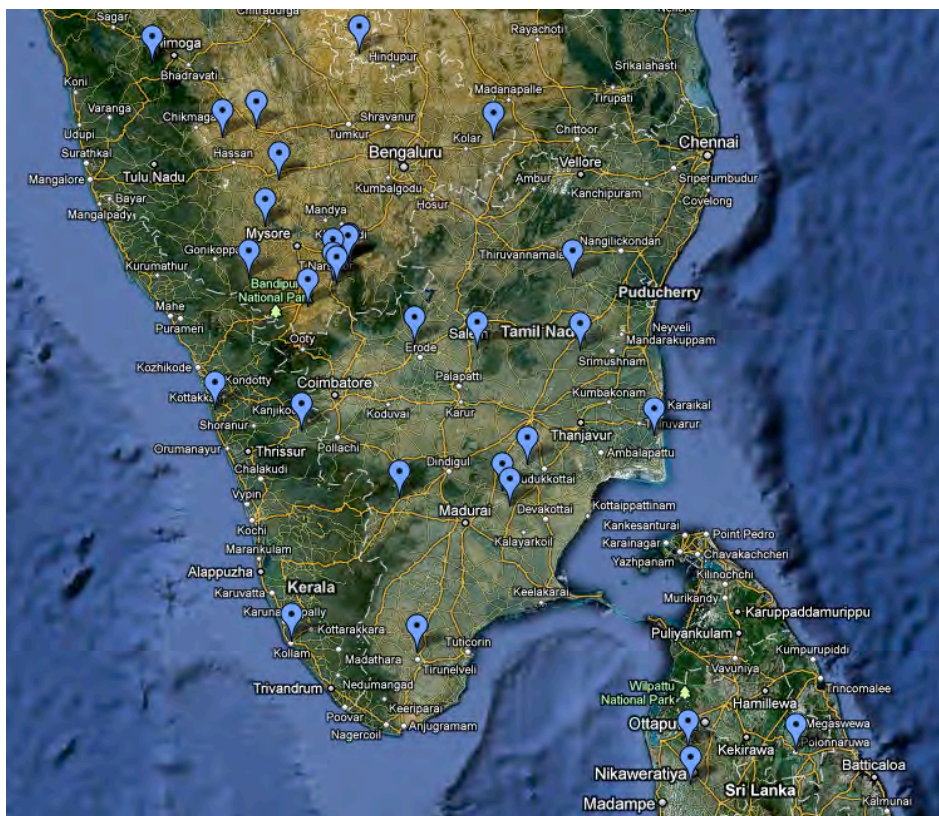
Map 9 Period 2: Tamil Nadu detail



Map 10 Period 3 (1070-1178): Overview



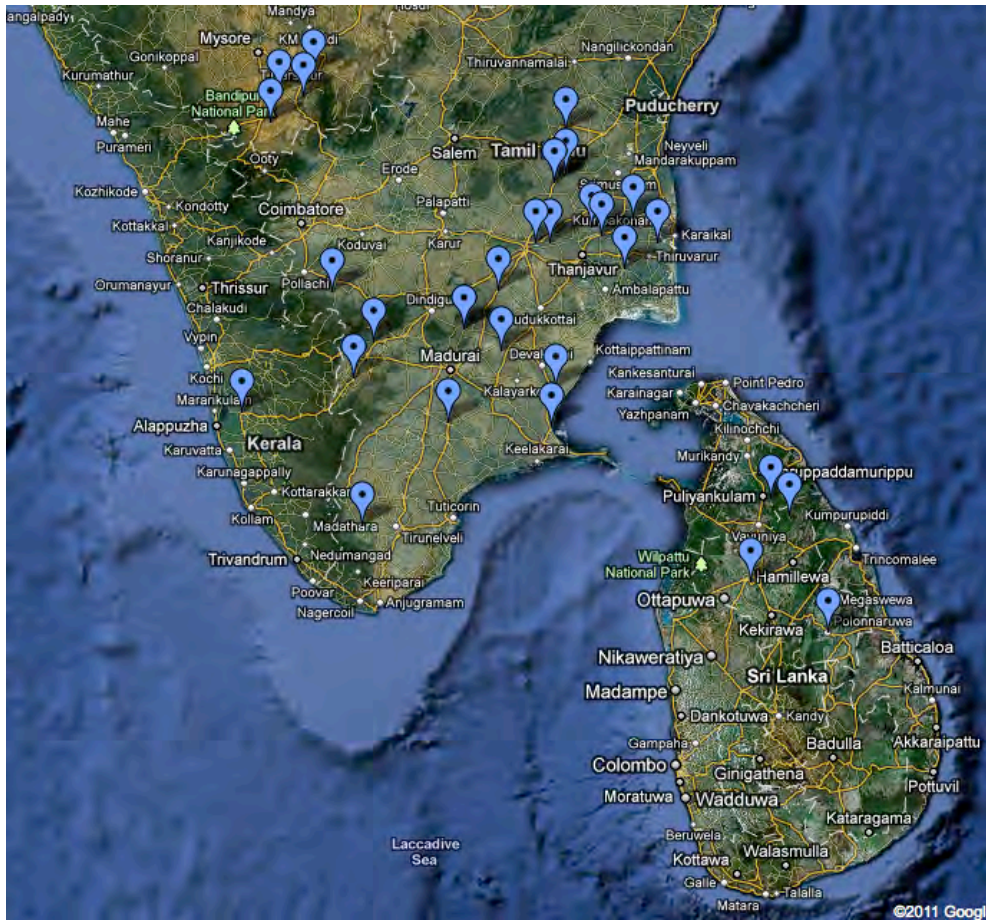
Map 11 Period 3: Karnataka detail



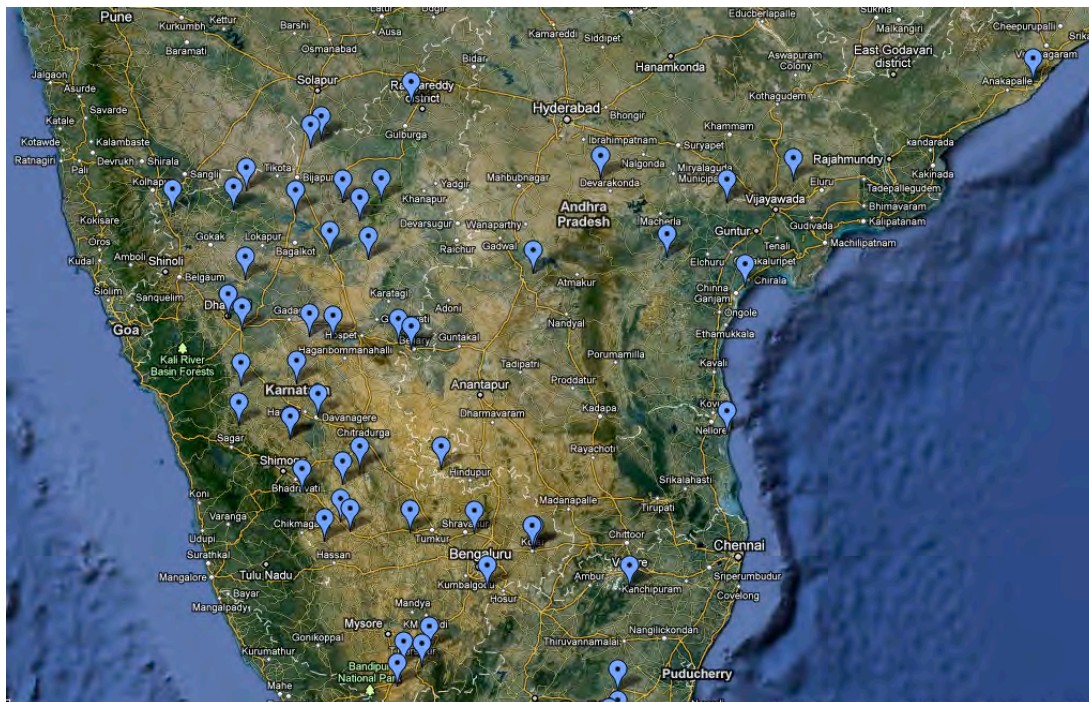
Map 12 Period 3: Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka detail



Map 13 Period 4 (1178-1279): Overview



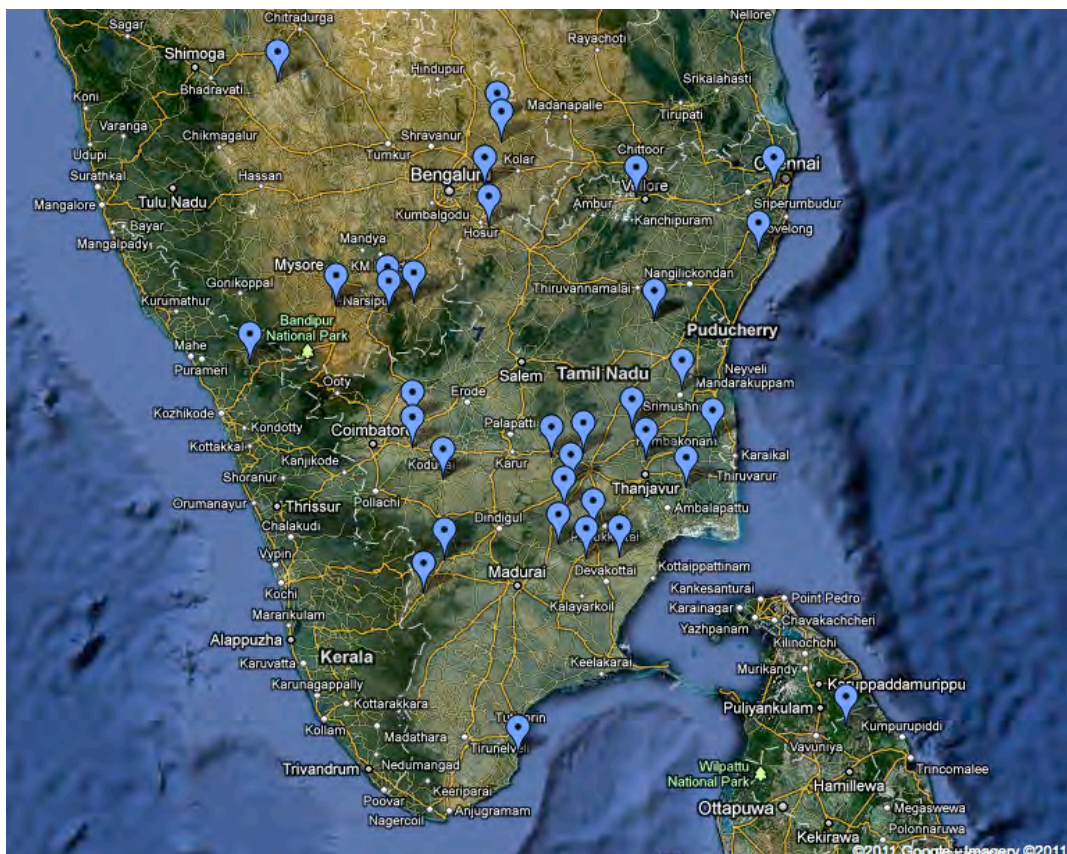
Map 14 Period 4: Tamil Nadu Detail



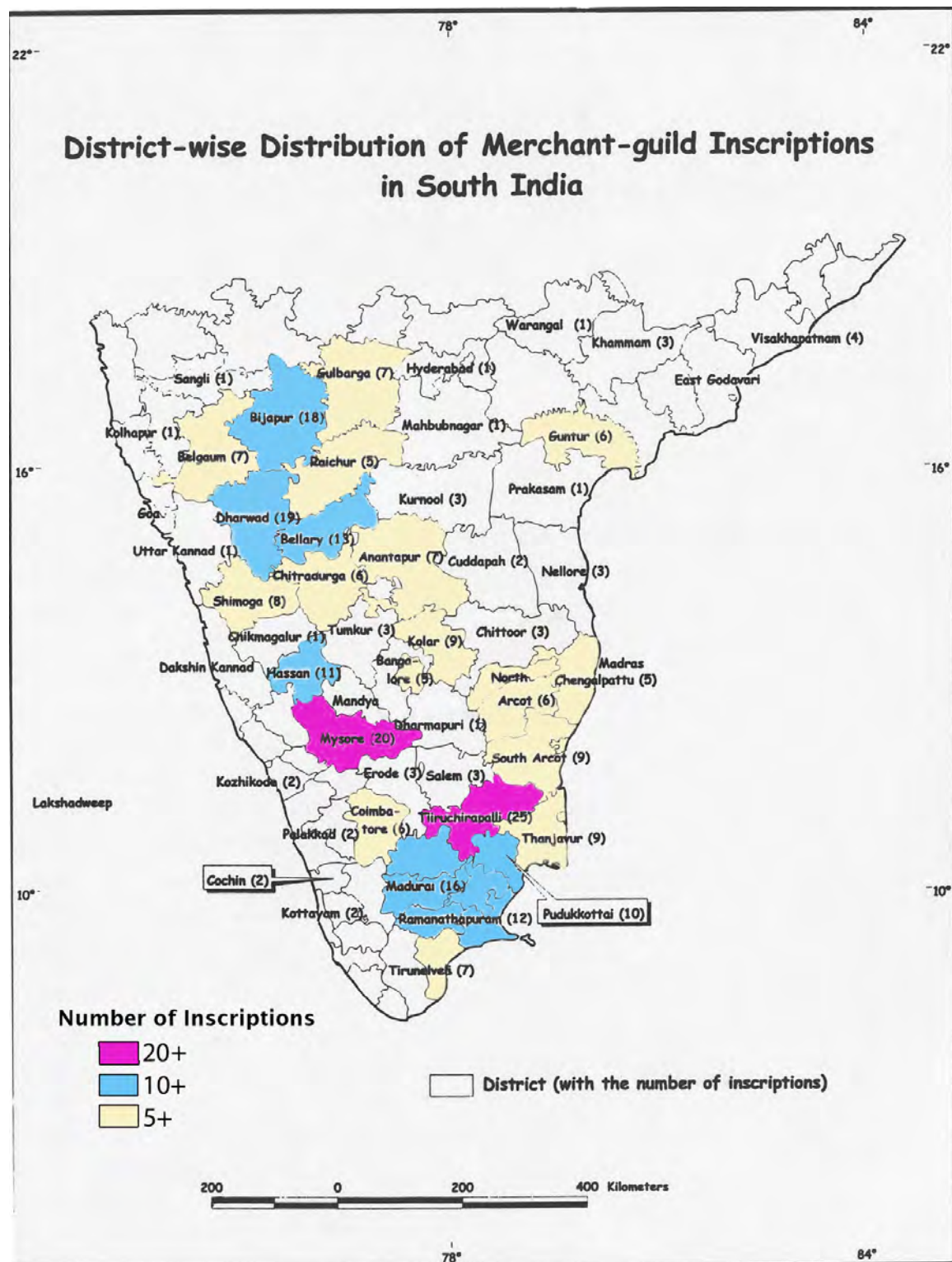
Map 15 Period 4: Karnataka detail



Map 16 Period 5 (1279-1400): Overview

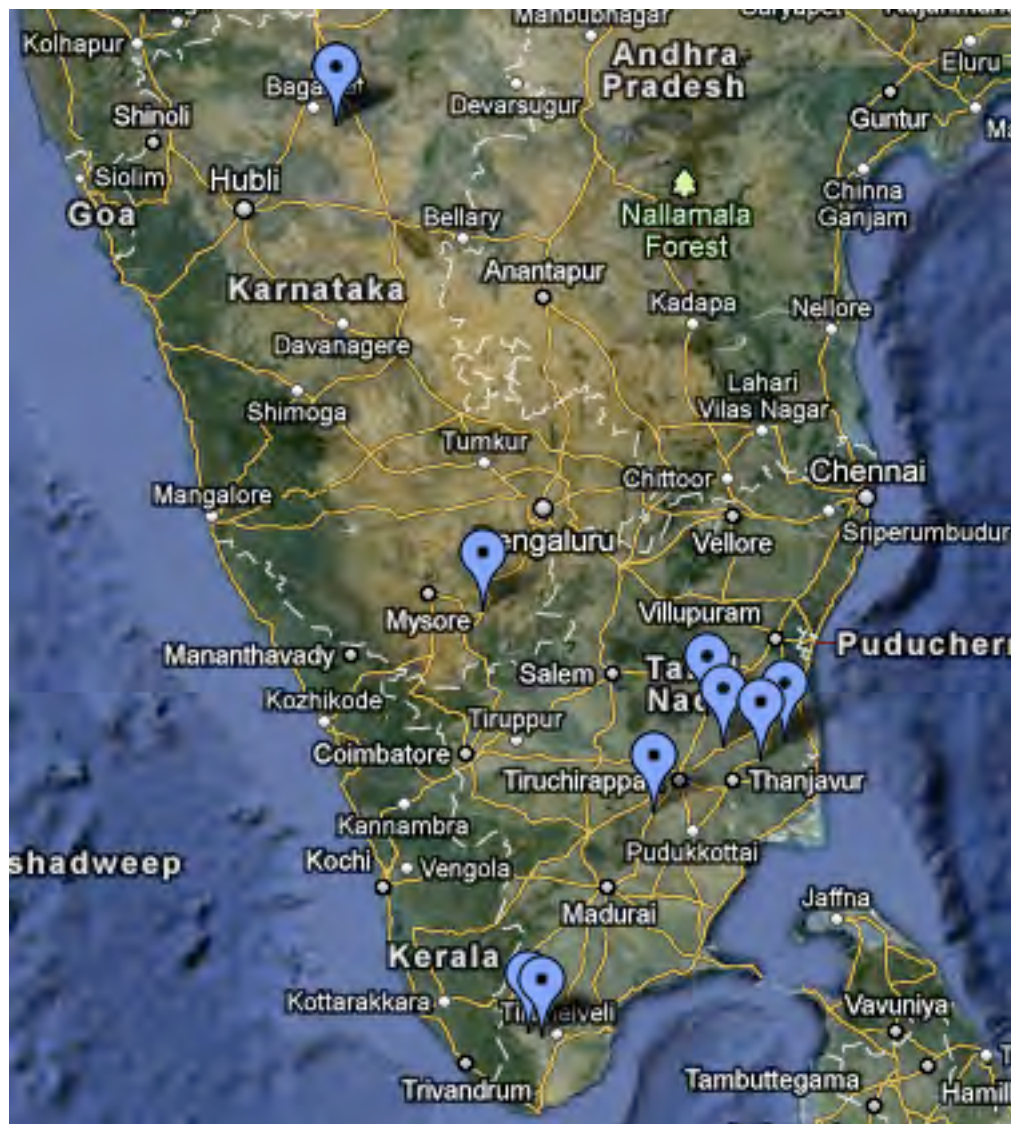


Map 17 Period 5: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu detail

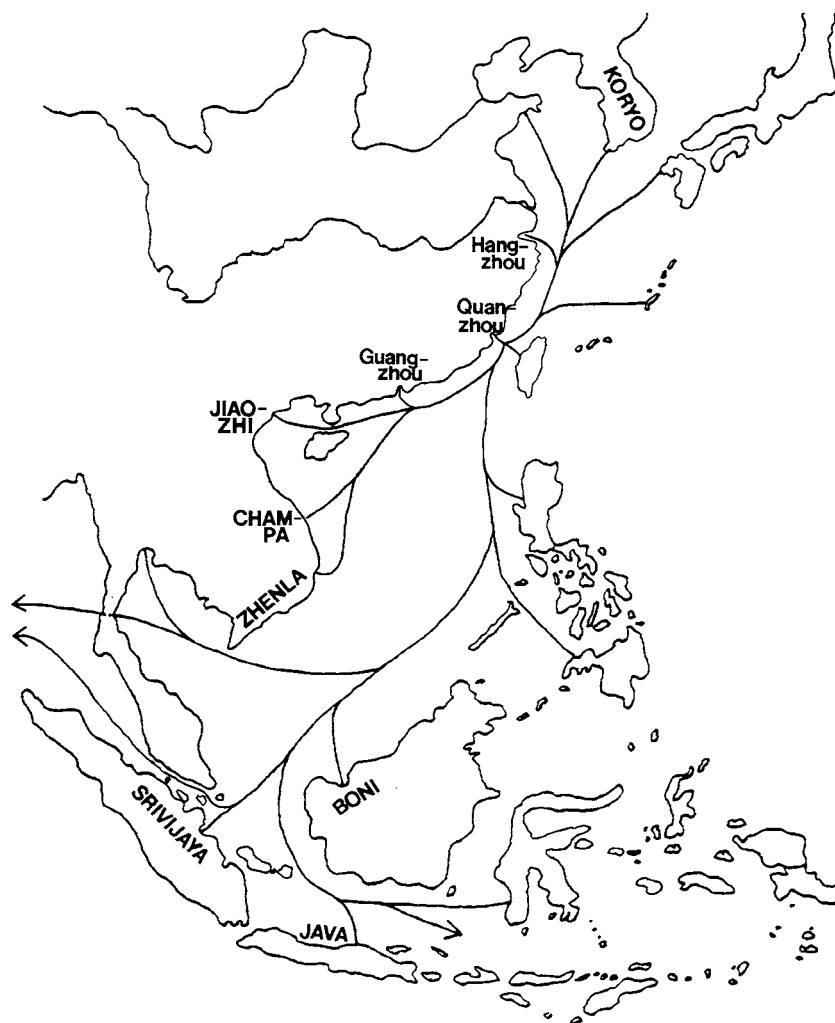


Map 18

South India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh) showing numbers of merchant organization inscriptions by district After N. Karshima, *AMCA*; color added by the author



Map 20 Temple locations mentioned in Chapter 3: “Constructing Community in Stone”



Map 21

Quanzhou trade routes c.1200

After Hugh Clark, "Muslims and Hindus in Quanzhou," 51.

FIGURES



Fig. 0.1 View from southeast of Rajarajesvara Temple, Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 0.2 *Puṣpapōtigai* at the Nakhon si Thammarat Museum, Thailand
Photo courtesy of Narayana Moorthy



Fig. 0.3 Kochchenganan Sculptural Panel, Quanzhou Maritime Museum (QMM)



Fig. 0.4 Kochchenganan narrative at Tiruvanaikka in Tiruchirappalli District Tamil Nadu, Photo courtesy of Katherine Kasdorf

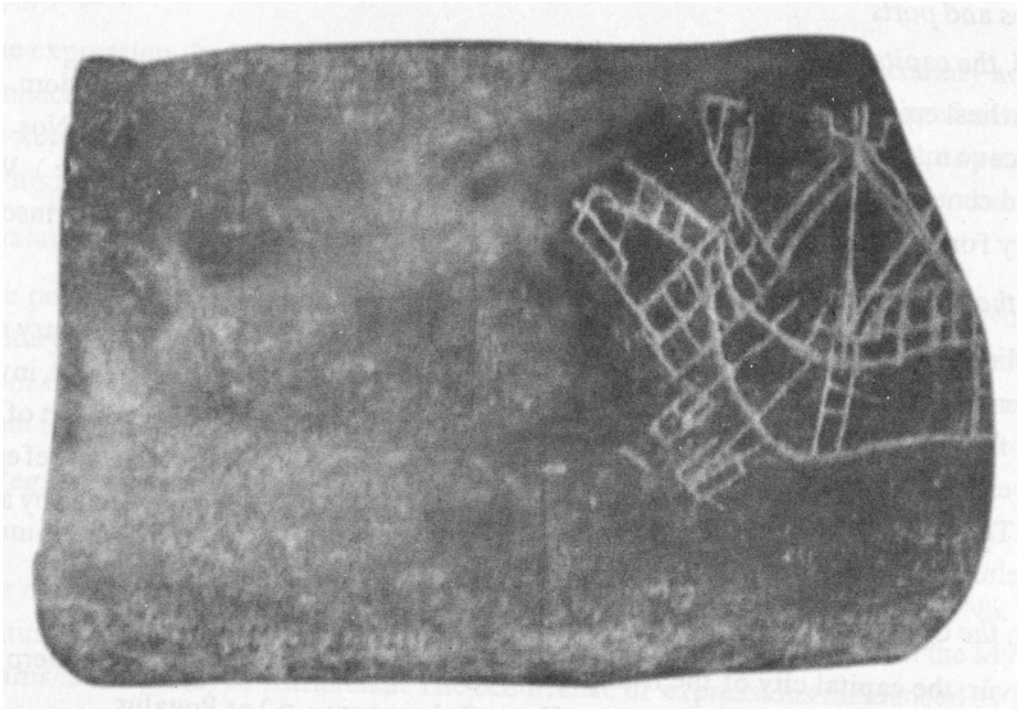


Fig. 1.1 Terracotta sherd from Alagankulam with incised ship, ca. 1st century BCE
After Iravatham Mahadevan, *Early Tamil Epigraphy from the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century A.D.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 154.

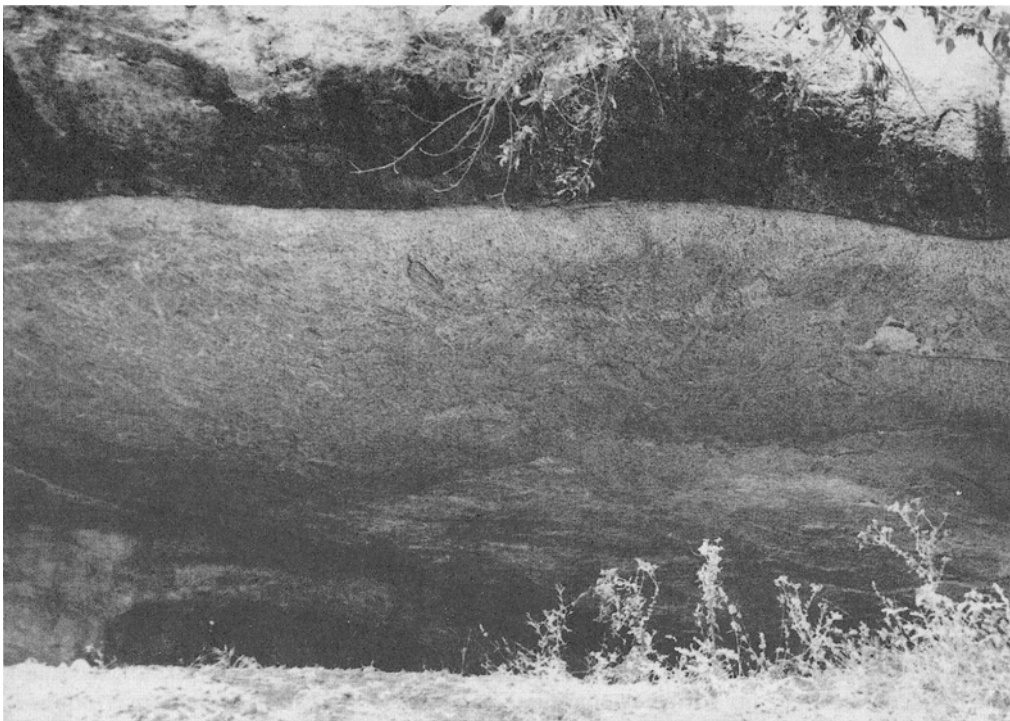


Fig. 1.2 Alagarmalai cave entrance, view of ceiling
After Mahadevan, op cit., 12.



Fig 2.1 Tiruvalangadu Copper plates of Rajendra Chola, ca. 1012-1044 CE
From "Chronicles of the Past in Copper," last modified December 25,
2009, <http://www.thehindu.com/arts/history-and-culture/article70517.ece>



Fig 2.2 Detail of seal, Tiruvalangadu Copper plates
From "Chronicles of the Past in Copper."



Fig. 2.3 View of eastern entrance through *mahāmaṇḍapa*, Shiva Temple in Pettavaittalai, Kulittalai Taluk, Tiruchirappalli District



Left: Fig. 2.4

Virakal, Nagainallur, Tiruchirappalli Dt, Warrior holding sword

Right: Fig. 2.5

Virakal, Nagainallur, View of warrior with sword and shield

Fig. 2.6

Merchant stone, Elkamvalasu, Sri Lanka

After S. Rajagopal, "Symbols on the Inscribed Stones of the Merchant Guilds," *AMCA*, 105



Fig. 2.7

Nagainallur merchant stone, Tiruchirappalli Dt.



Fig. 2.8 Nagainallur rubbing
After S. Rajagopal, *AMCA*, 105

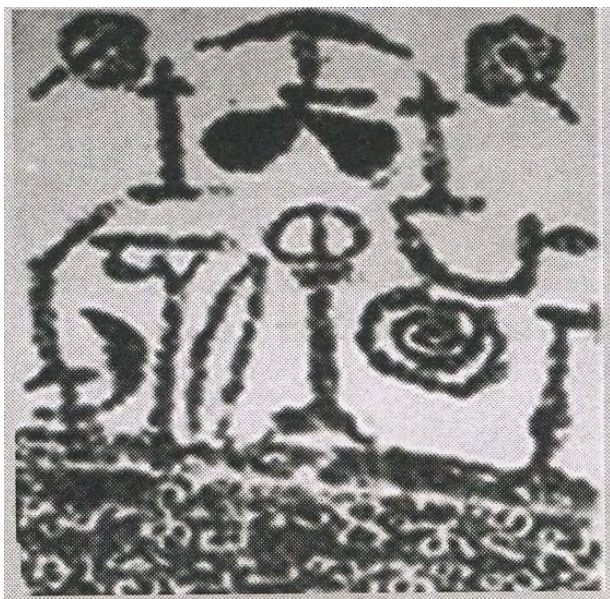


Fig. 2.9 Kaliyampatti merchant stone rubbing
After Rajagopal, *AMCA*, 105



Fig. 2.10 Merchant stone at Melnangavaram, Karur District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 2.11 Detail of unidentified object framed by lamps and poles, Melnangavaram



Fig. 2.12
Detail of sickle, billhook, and whip



Fig. 2.13
Detail of sword, Melnangavaram



Fig. 2.14 Korravai/Merchant Stone, Victorious Durga, Melnangavaram



Fig. 2.15 Standing Durga, Tirumandisvaram temple, Gramam, Villupurum Dt, TN



Fig. 2.16 Stone with Elephant Head, Jakarta National Museum
Photo courtesy of Narayana Moorthy with background modification by the author

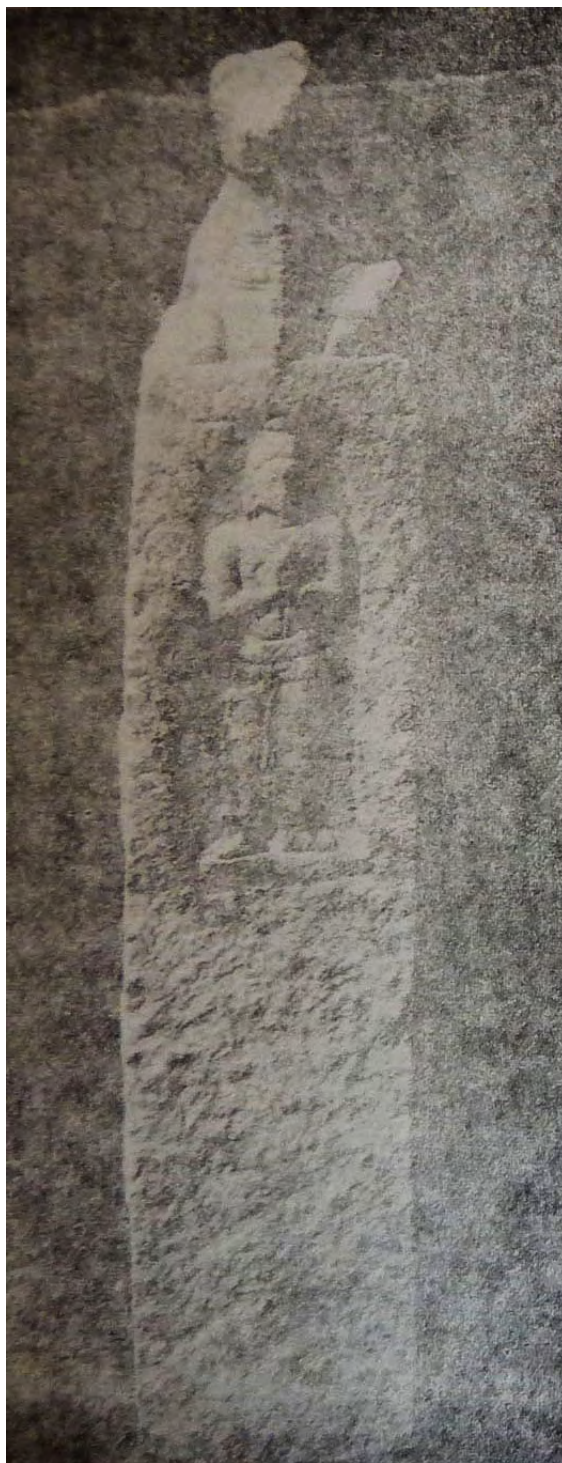


Fig. 2.17 Boundary Stone at Hampi, Hampi site museum
After C.T.M. Kotriash, "Boundary Stones: A Study," 46

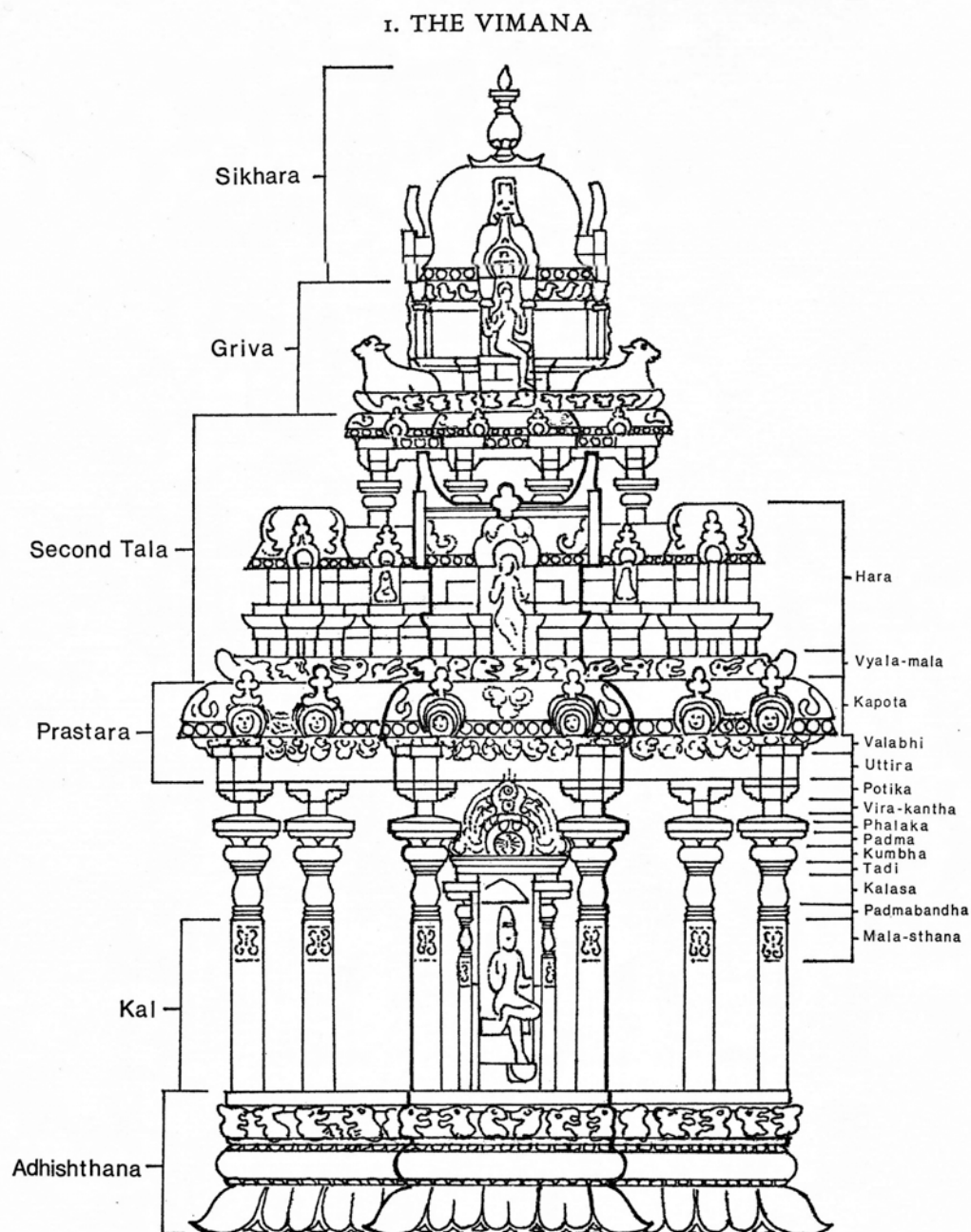


Fig. 3.1

After Douglas Barrett, *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture, 866-1014 A.D.*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 125.



Fig. 3.2 Western view of Airavatesvara's *vimana* at Darasuram, Kumbakonam Tk., Tanjavur District, TN



Fig. 3.3 View from East of Adipurisvara temple's stone superstructure,
Tiruvorriyur, Tiruvallur District.
(Photo courtesy of the French Institute of Pondicherry)



Fig. 3.4 View from southwest of Adipurisvara's superstructure
(Photo courtesy of the French Institute of Pondicherry)



Fig. 3.5 View from southwest of *vimāna* and *ardhamandapa* with projected shrines, Manavalesvara temple, Tiruvelvikkudi, Tanjavur District



Fig. 3.6 Detail of Manavalesvara temple's *adhiṣṭhāna*, Tiruvelvikkudi

(Photo courtesy of Katherine Kasdorf)



Fig. 3.7 Detail of rider on *vyāla* mount, Manavalesvara temple, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.8 View of southern wall, Manavalesvara temple, Tiruvelvikkudi. Note rough and shallow *dēvakōṣṭhas* of Agastya and standing Ganesha.

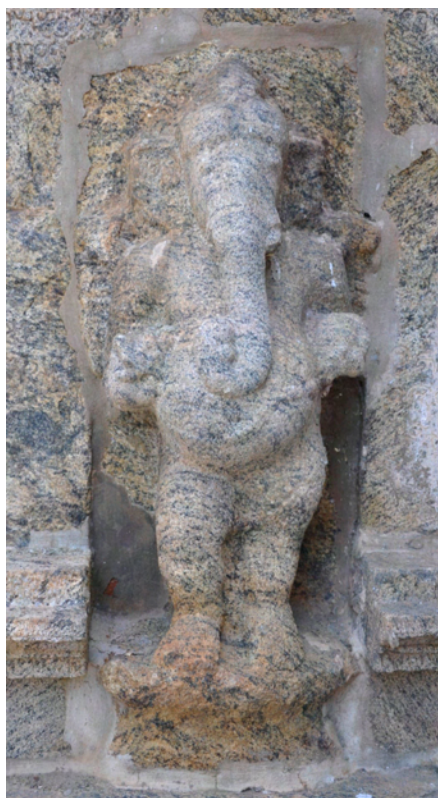


Fig. 3.9 Ganesha, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.10 Nataraja, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.11 Agastya, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.12 Detail of donor portrait, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.13 Dakshinamurti, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.14 Vishnu, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.15 Lingodbhava, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.16 Ardhanarisvara,
Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.17 Detail of Brahma, Tiruvelvikkudi

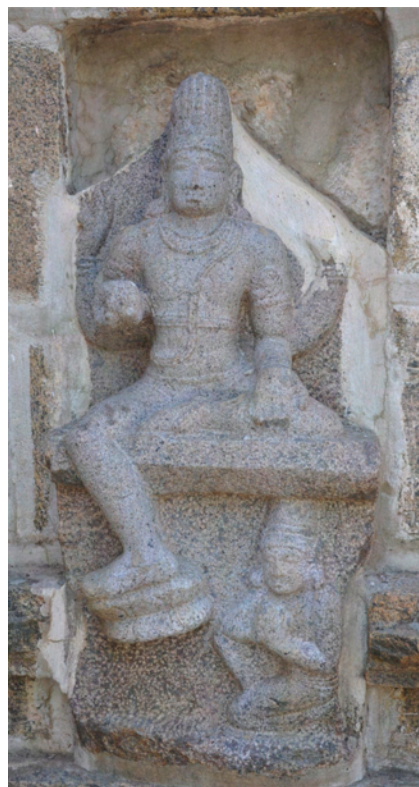


Fig. 3.18 Shiva and Chandesamurti, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.19 Bhikshatana, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.20 View of southern *ardhamandapa* wall, Sakisvara temple, Tiruppurumubiyam, Tanjavur District, TN
Note roughly carved niches indicating sculptures' later installation date



Fig. 3.21 View of *vimāna* from west, Vatamulesvara, Kizhpalavur, Ariyalur Dt.



Fig. 3.22 Detail of *pañjara*, Vatamulesvara
Note how pilasters break through *paṭṭika*



Fig. 3.23 Nataraja, Vatamulesvara, Kizhpalavur



Fig. 3.24 Kalyanasundarar, Vatamulesvara, Kizhpalavur



Fig. 3.25 Kalyanasundarar image on *tōrana* over Nataraja niche at Manavalesvara, Tiruvelvikkudi



Fig. 3.26 Southeast view of Ramasvamy temple at Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli Dt.



Fig. 3.27 Western view of Ramasvamy temple, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli Dt.



Fig. 3.28 Detail of Ramasvamy temple *nāsikās* containing dance positions
Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli District



Fig. 3.29 View of Ramasvamy temple's brick superstructure, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli District



Fig. 3.30 View of brick superstructure's central niche containing a seated Vishnu holding conch and discus at Ramasvamy temple, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli District



Fig. 3.31 Northwest view of Devasvamudaiyar temple's Amman temple, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli District



Fig. 3.32 View from southeast of Devasvamiyudaiyar's Shiva temple, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli Dt.



Fig. 3.33 View from west of Tiruvalisvarar temple, Tiruvalisvaram, Tirunelveli Dt.



Fig. 3.34 Northwest view of Mudigondesvara vimana, Mudigonda, Kollegal District, Karnataka



Fig. 3.35 Durga, Mudigonda

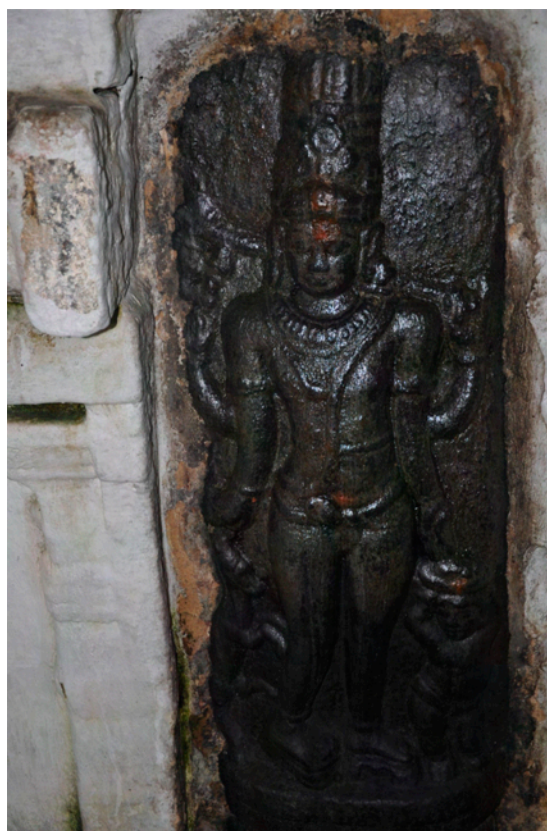


Fig. 3.36 Bhikshatana, Mudigonda



Fig. 3.37 Vishnu, Mudigonda



Fig. 3.38 Brahma, Mudigonda



Fig. 3.39 Racigudi, Aihole, Karnataka, mid-10th century
After Ajay Sinha, *Imagining Architects*, 53.

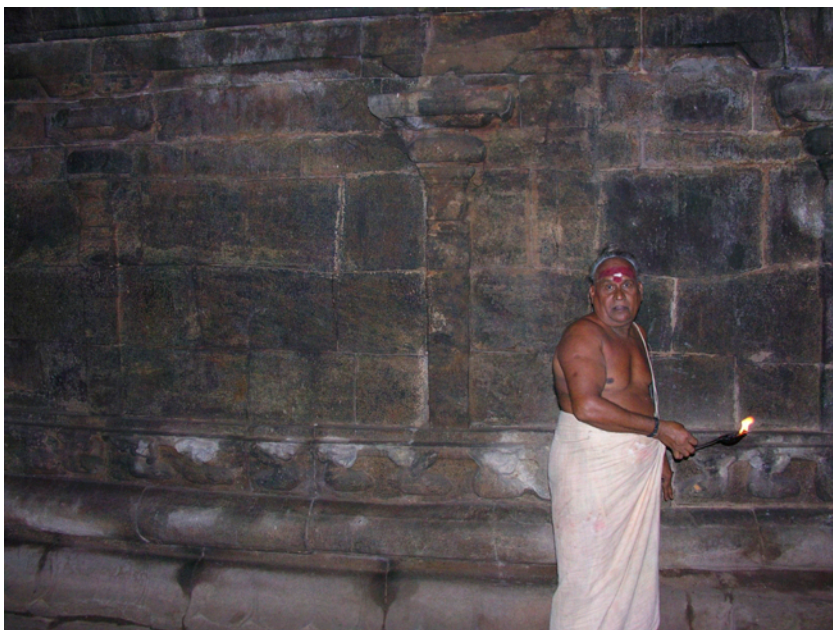


Fig. 3.40 *Ardhamaṇḍapa* of Tiruvalisvarar, Valikandapuram Village, Ariyalur District



Fig. 3.41 *Devakōṣṭha* at Tiruvalisvarar



Fig. 3.42 *Mahamandapa* at Tiruvalisvarar, Valikandapuram



Fig. 3.43 Composite *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar (with warrior seated astride rearing lion), Tiruvalisvarar, Valikandapuram



Fig. 3.44 Warrior astride rearing lion, ca. mid-twelfth century, detail of eastern gōpura at Somanatharsvami, Palaiyarai, Tanjavur District



Fig. 3.45 Hanuman worshipping a *linga*
Tiruvalisvarar



Fig. 3.46 Rama and Sita, Tiruvalisvarar



Fig. 3.47 Durga on lion mount, Tiruvalisvarar



Fig. 3.48 Aiyanar, Tiruvalisvarar



Fig. 3.49 Temple tank, Tiruvalisvarar, Valikandapuram



Fig. 3.50 Detail of tank's *citrakhaṇḍa* pillars, Tiruvalisvarar, Valikandapuram



Fig. 3.51 View from east of Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar temple at Koyilpatti, Pudukkottai Dt.



Fig. 3.52 Detail of *nandis* at gateway, Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar, Koyilpatti



Fig. 3.53 View from northwest of Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar, Koyilpatti



Fig. 3.54 View of *adhiṣṭhāna* on southern side of Rajarajacholisvaramudaiyar, Koyilpatti



Fig. 3.55 Detail of *kantha* relief showing Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Koyilpatti



Fig. 3.56 Detail of *kantha* containing Karaikkal Ammaiyar relief, Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram, Tanjavur District



Fig. 3.57 View from east of southern shrine at Muvarkoyil, Kodumbalur, Pudukkottai District



Fig. 3.58 Wooden temple chariot from Tiruppurumbiyam, Tanjavur District



Fig. 3.59 Amritaghatesvara temple at Melakkadambur, ca. 1113



Fig. 3.60 Rearing Horse on *ardhamaṇḍapa*, Amritagatesvarar temple, Melakkadambur, Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 3.61 Rearing horse on front porch at Somanatesvara, Pazhaiyarai, Tanjavur District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 3.62 View of *adhiṣṭhāna* and wall from Kampaharesvarar temple at Tribhuvanam, c. 1212, Tanjavur District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 3.63 *Citrakhaṇḍa* pillars in the *mahamandapa* of the Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram, Tamil Nadu

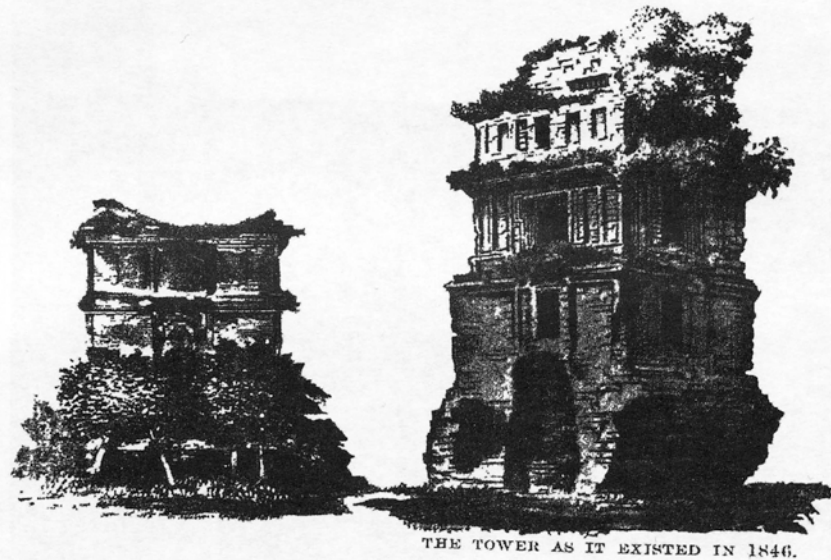


Fig. 3.64 *Citrakhaṇḍa* with images of dancing Shiva and Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Airavatesvara temple at Darasuram



Fig 4.1 “Tomb of the Foreigner” (*Fan ke mu*); Note: Arabic not outlined
Quanzhou Maritime Museum (QMM)

FIGURE 7.6
Towers at Nagapattinam — Drawings of Sir Walter Elliot



Source: *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. II.

Fig. 4.2 Nagapattinam “Pagoda”
After Gokul Seshadri in *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa*, 116



Fig. 4.3 View of eastern “pagoda” at Kaiyuan temple, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.4

View of front porch showing *vyāla* bas-reliefs on plinth
Kaiyuan temple, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.5 *Citrakhaṇḍa* pillars framing back entrance of main hall
Kaiyuan Temple, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.6 Detail of *citrakhaṇḍa* pillar showing medallions, Kaiyuan Temple, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.7 Indic carvings displayed at Quanzhou Maritime Museum, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.8 Indic carvings displayed at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.9 View of *citrakhaṇḍa* pillars at Tianhou Gong temple Quanzhou



Fig. 4.10 Kali sculptural panel (worshipped as Guanyin)
Chidian pavilion, Xinjiang County, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.11 Bilingual Tamil-Chinese Inscription, c. 1281
Xiamen University Museum

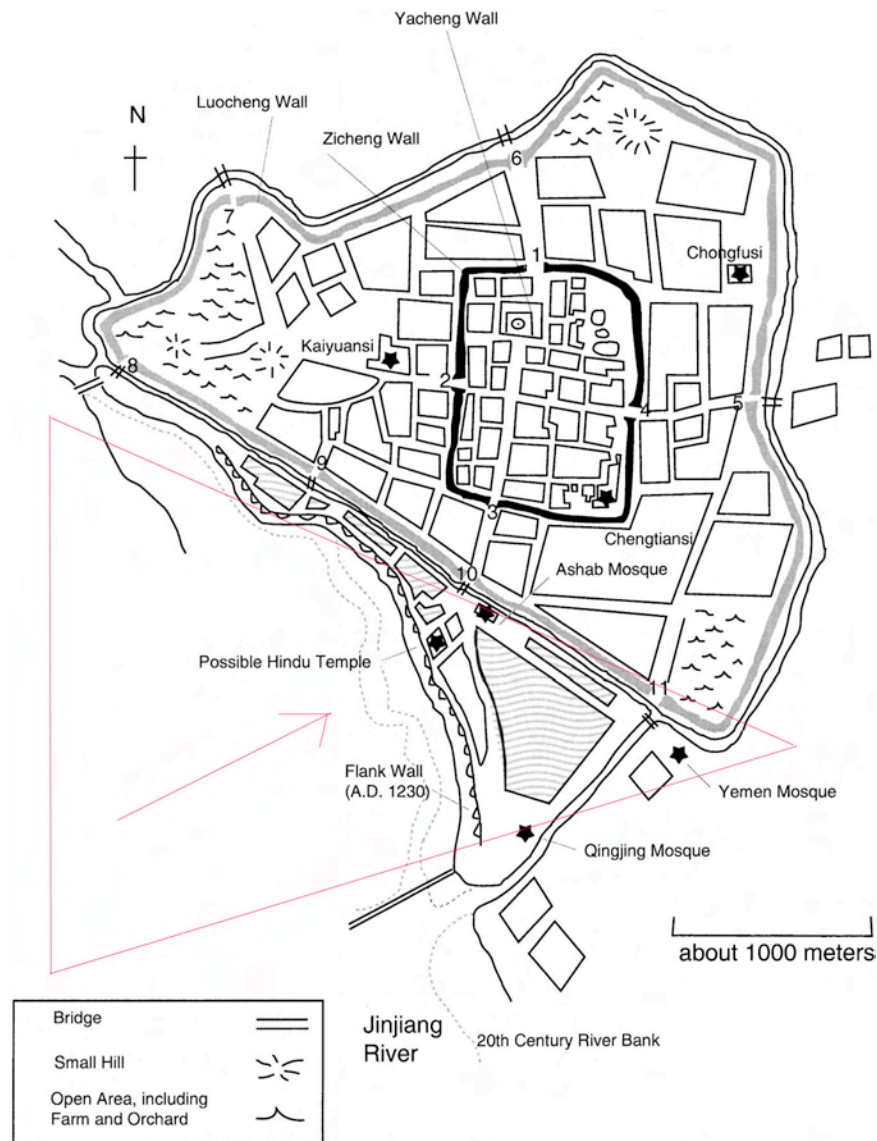


Fig. 3. Map of Quanzhou City in the Song Dynasty showing city walls and gates, important types of buildings, mosques, and possible Hindu temple site (base map from So, 1991a, pp. 98, 101, 105, with permission). Gates: 1. Quanshan 2. Suqing 3. Chongyang 4. Yingchun 5. Renfeng (East) 6. Chaotian (North) 7. Yicheng (West) 8. Linzhang (Southwest) 9. Tongjin (Flank) 10. Zhennan (Southern) 11. Tonghuai (Southeast Watergate).

Fig. 4.12 Map delineating major architectural features of Old Quanzhou City After Richard Pearson, "Quanzhou Archaeology," 27.

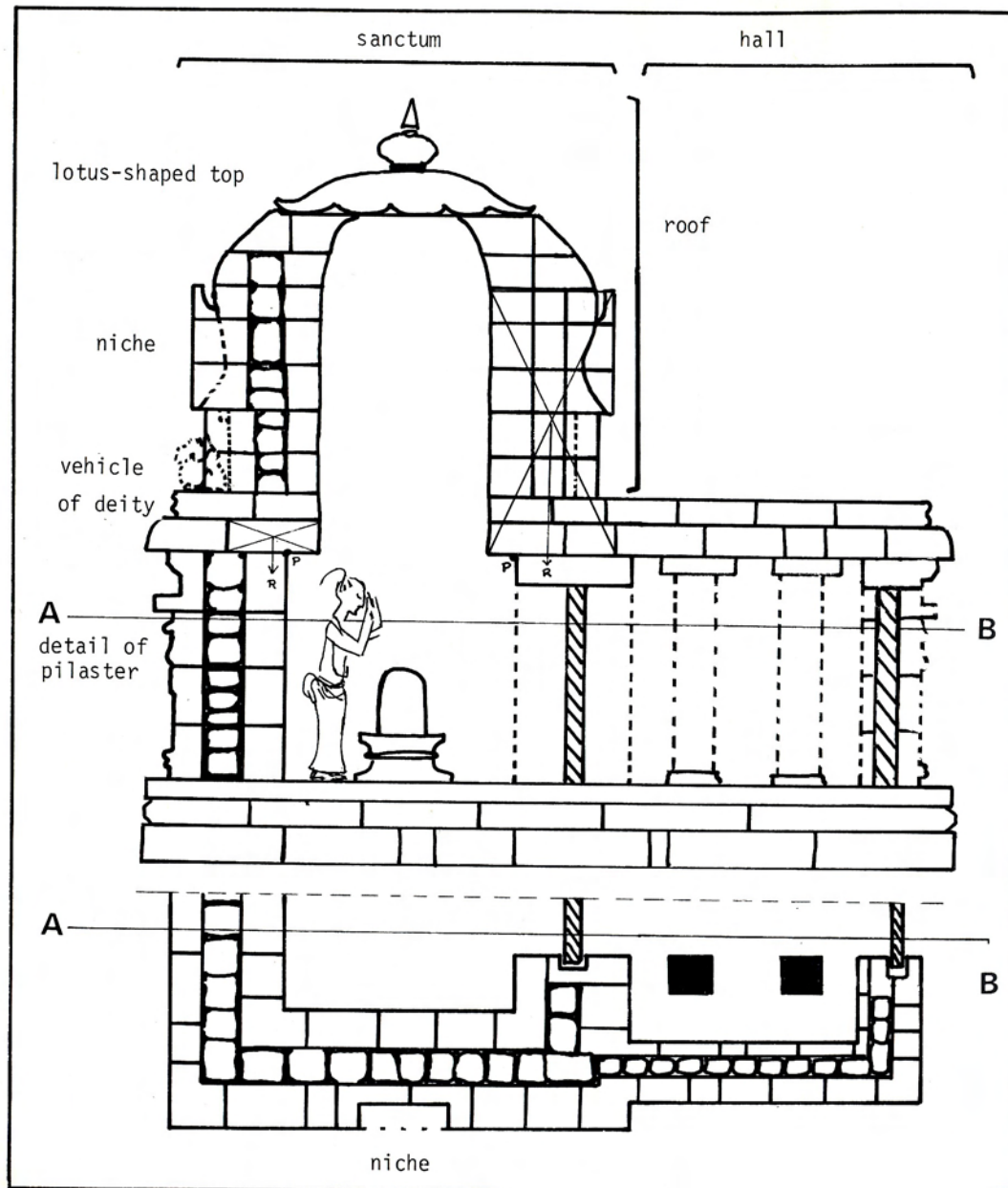


Fig.a. Construction of an Early Coḷa shrine with one storey and a cupola. In the roof niches jut out distinctly at the four cardinal points of the cupola. Together with the solid blocks carved in the shape of the deity's vehicle at the four corners of the cornice they were probably designed as contreforts. As a result, the centre of gravity(R) of the cupola's mass remains within the pivotal point(P). (schematic reconstruction on the basis of observations of some ruins such as those at Tiruchchennampūṇḍi and Pudūr(N.A.) as well as the Śokkeśvara at Kāñcī).

Fig. 4.13

Diagram showing Drāvida temple's construction method
After Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer, *Koyils in the Colamandalam*, ii.



Fig. 4.14 Detail of column band with scrolling peony and lotus motif, Kaiyuan temple



Fig. 4.15 Detail of Christian gravestone with scrolling peony and lotus motif, QMM



Fig. 4.16 Colossal Daoist deity, Qingyuanshan slope, Quanzhou

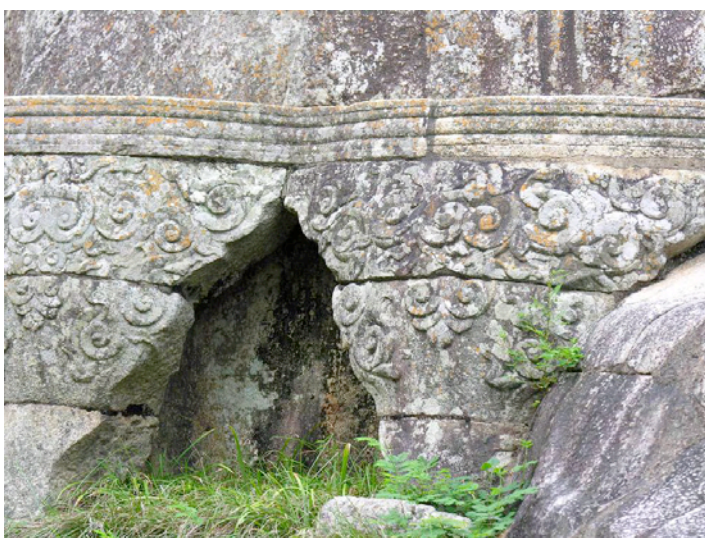


Fig. 4.17 Detail of Daoist deity armrest showing cloud motif



Fig. 4.18 Indic carving with cloud motif, QMM



Fig. 4.19 Detail of gravestone with Arabic script and cloud motif, c. 1302, QMM



Fig. 4.20 Detail of *vyāla* reliefs from Kaiyuan Temple's plinth, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.21 Detail of *vyālamāla* from Tiruvalisvarar at Tiruvalisvaram, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 4.22 Detail of *vyālamāla* in Shiva temple at Agara, Chamarajnagar Dt., Karnataka



Fig. 4.23 *Padma jagatī* in QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.24 View of *jagatī* reused at Kaiyuan Temple, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.25 *Kumuda* at QMM; note lotus detail, Quanzhou

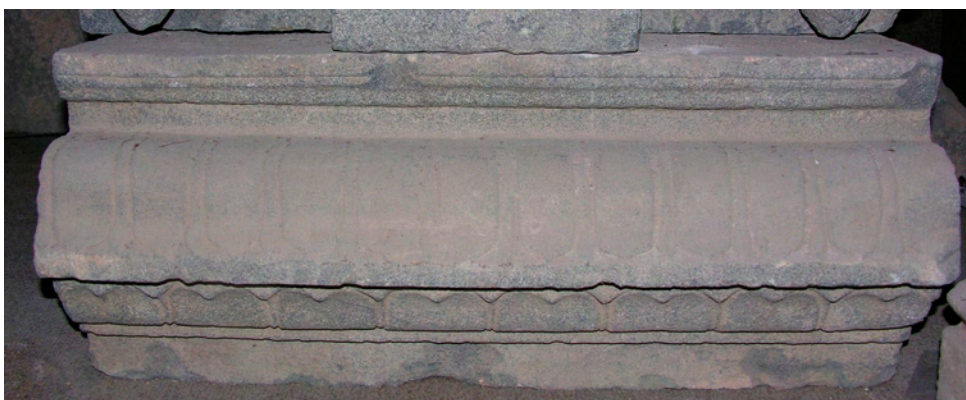


Fig. 4.26 *Paṭṭika* at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.27 *Kaṇṭha* reused in Quanzhou building
After Wu Wenliang, *Quanzhou Zong Jiao Shi Ke*, 2005, p. 500



Fig. 4.28 Detail of *kaṇṭha* from Ramasvamy temple, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli Dt., Tamil Nadu

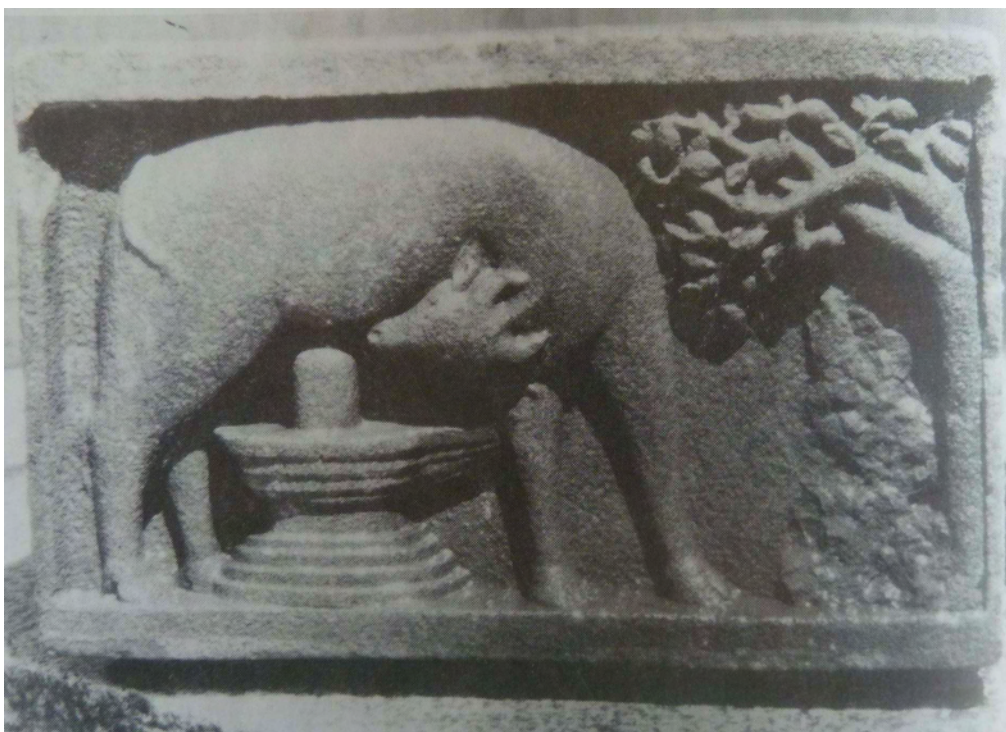


Fig. 4.29 Tirumular/ Candesvara panel from Quanzhou (currently at National Palace Museum of Beijing) After Wenliang 2005, p. 490



Fig. 4.30 Tirumular panel at Apatsahayesvara temple in Tiruppalanam, Tanjavur Dt., Tamil Nadu



Fig. 4.31 Tirumular panel at Shiva temple in Tiruttandanapuram, Sivaganga Dt. Tamil Nadu



Fig. 4.32 *Kapōta* (for *dēvakōṣṭha*), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.33 Guardian figure, ca. 11th century at Anping Bridge, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.34 *Tōrana* with “donor portraits” at QMM



Fig. 4.35 Donor portraits at Umamahesvara temple, Konerirajapuram, Tanjavur District, Tamil Nadu



Fig. 4.36 Memorial structure on Kaiyuan Temple grounds, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.37 Detail of Devasvamudaiyar *dēvakōṣṭha*, Cheranmadevi, Tirunelveli
 Note pilaster components: *ōma*, *mālāsthāna*, *laśuna*, *ghaṭa*, and *puṣpapōdigai*



Fig. 4.38 *Ōma* at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.39 *Mālāsthāna* at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.40 *Laśuna* at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.41 *Ghaṭa* at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.42 *Puṣpapōtigai* (type 4), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.43 *Puspapōtigai* (type 1), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.44 *Puspapōtigai* (type 2), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.45 *Puspapōtigai* (type 3), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.46 *Puṣpapōtigai* (type 5), QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.47 Profile of *kapōta* (Type 1) at Kaiyuan Temple Site Museum, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.48 *Kapōta* (Type 1) at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.49 View of *iwan* with *muqarnas* at *Shengyou si* (Ashab) mosque, Quanzhou

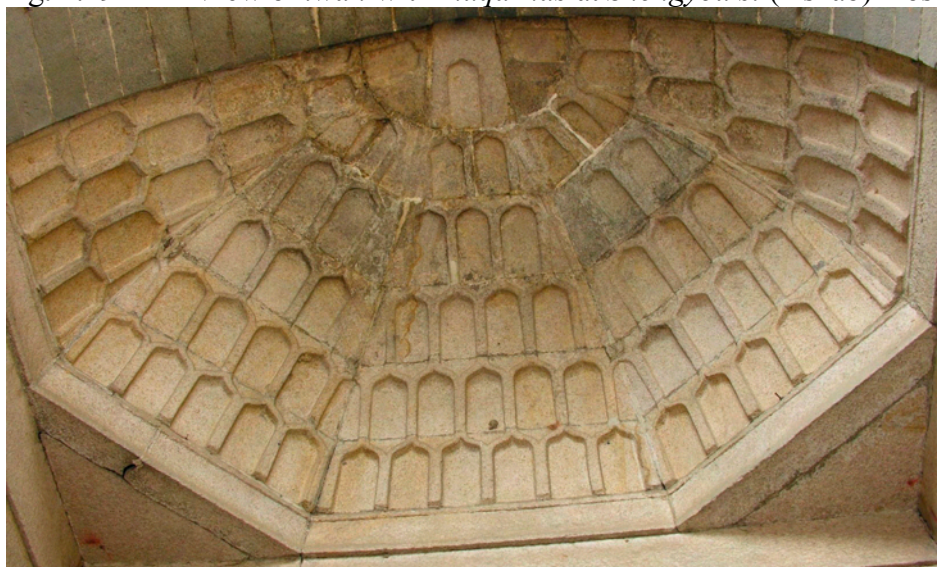


Fig. 4.50 Detail of *muqarnas* at *Shengyou si*, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.51 Profile of *kapōta* (Type 2) at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.52 “L-shaped face component” comprising parapet at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.53 *Stūpikā* at QMM, Quanzhou

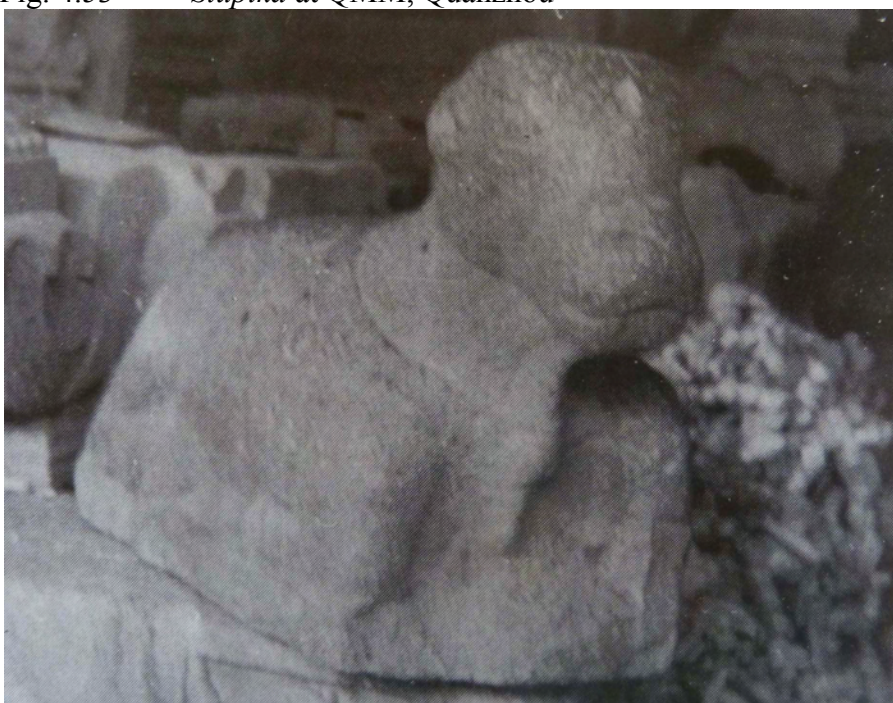


Fig. 4.54 *Nandi* in Quanzhou (Current location unknown)
After Wu Wenliang 2005, 492.



Fig. 4.55 *Hastihasta* fragment at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.56 Rearing Lion (Current location unknown), After Wu Wenliang 2005, 491.

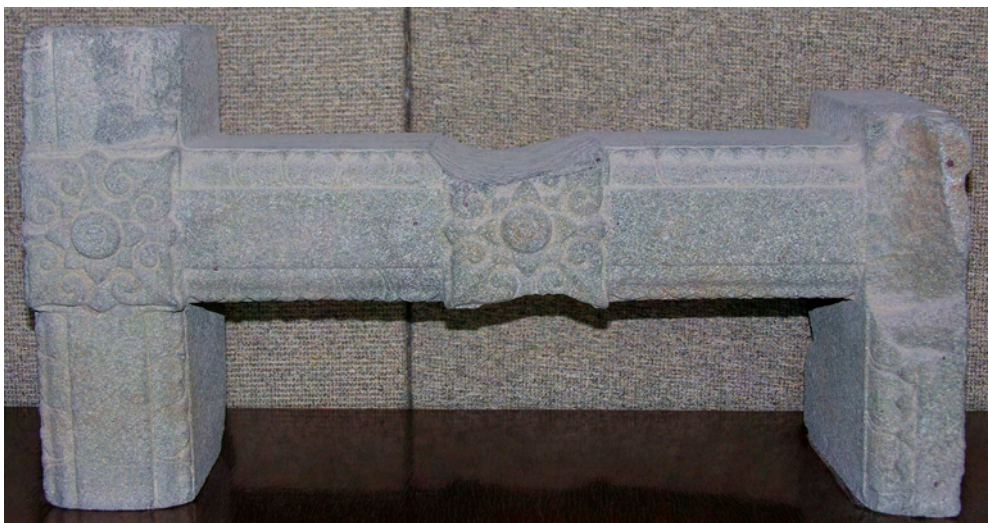


Fig. 4.57 *Jāla* fragment at QMM, Quanzhou



Fig. 4.58
Door jamb with monkey
Xiamen University Museum



4.59-60



Door jamb (full and detail) with devotee
Xiamen University Museum



Fig. 4.61 Narasimha



Fig. 4.62 Krishna felling Arjuna Tree



Fig. 4.63 Deer eating fungus with *Xian* in background



4.64 Chasing Phoenix



4.65 Krishna Playing Flute



4.66 Krishna and Gopis



Fig. 4.67 Wrestlers



Fig. 4.68 Vishnu seated with wives
(Lakshmi and Bhudevi)



Fig. 4.69 Vishnu Mounted on Garuda



Fig. 4.70 Gajendramoksha



Fig. 4.71 Bhairava



Fig. 4.72 Lions Chasing Ball and Ribbon



Fig. 4.73 Silver box with chasing Phoenix motif, ca. 1127-1279, Fuzhou Provincial Museum



Fig. 4.74 Wrestlers motif on sculptural panel from Darasuram, Tanjavur District Tamil Nadu



Fig. 4.75 Detail of crocodile in medallion containing Gajendra moksha purana



Fig. 4.76 Detail of Narasimha panel from a shrine at the Somanatharsvami temple, Palaiyarai, Kumbakonam Tk., Tanjavur District



Fig. 4.77 Dance mandapa at Somanatharsvami temple, Palaiyarai



Fig. 4.78 Detail of Garuda, Sivayoganatasvami, Tiruvisanallur



Fig. 4.79

Nandi pavilion at Sivayoganatasvami temple, Tiruvisanallur village, Kumbakonam Tk., Tanjavur District



Fig. 4.80

Vishnu, ca. 925. Kongu Nadu Bronze. After Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred*, 177.



Fig. 4.81 Detail of pillar with representation of Shiva and attendant (probably Karaikkal Ammaiyar) dancing on corpses. Sivakozhutanesvara temple, Tirusattimutram, Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu.

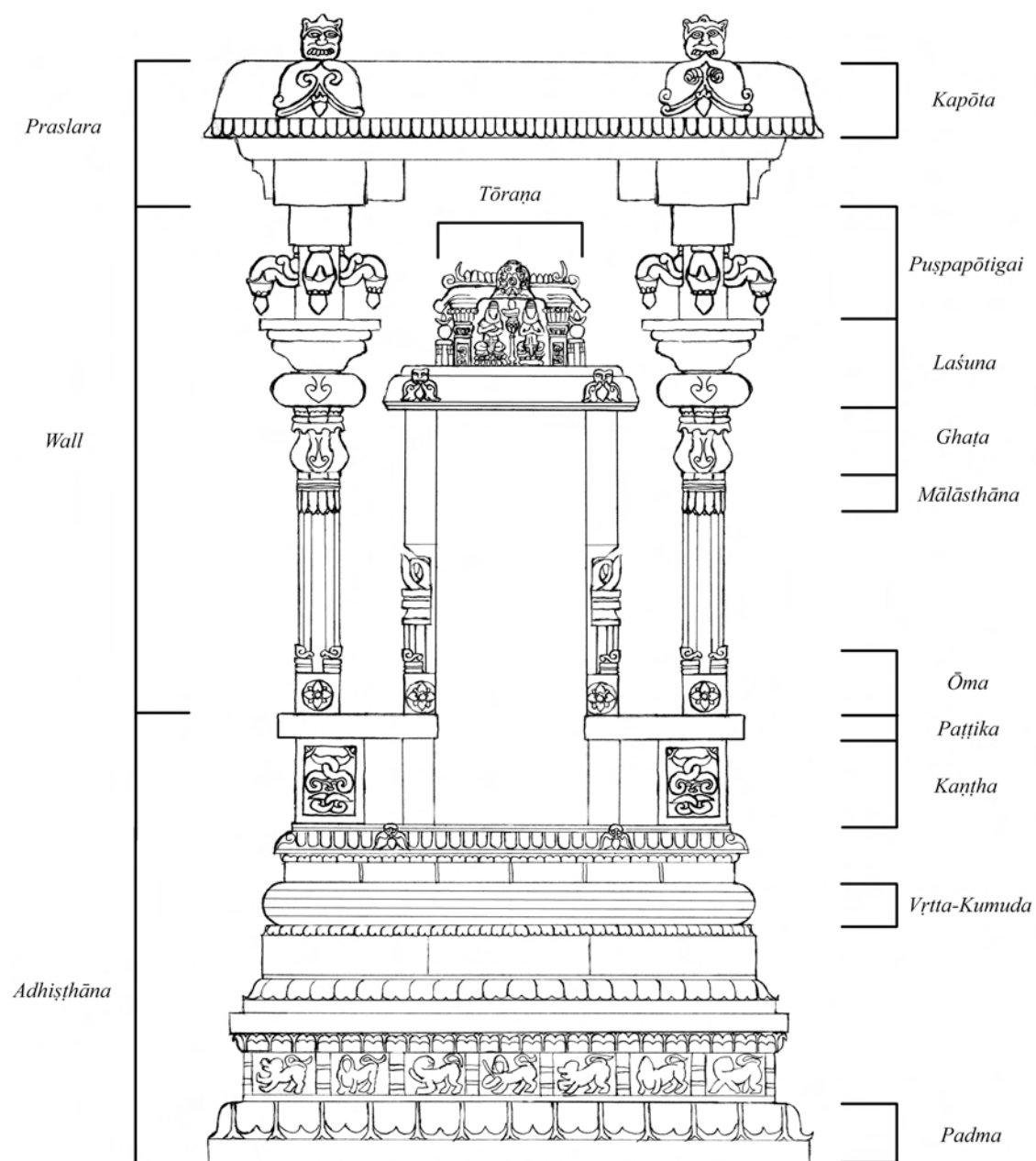


Fig. 4.82

View of Quanzhou Shiva temple, reconstruction of central niche (*bhadrashala*). Not to scale. Artist: Mike Lee

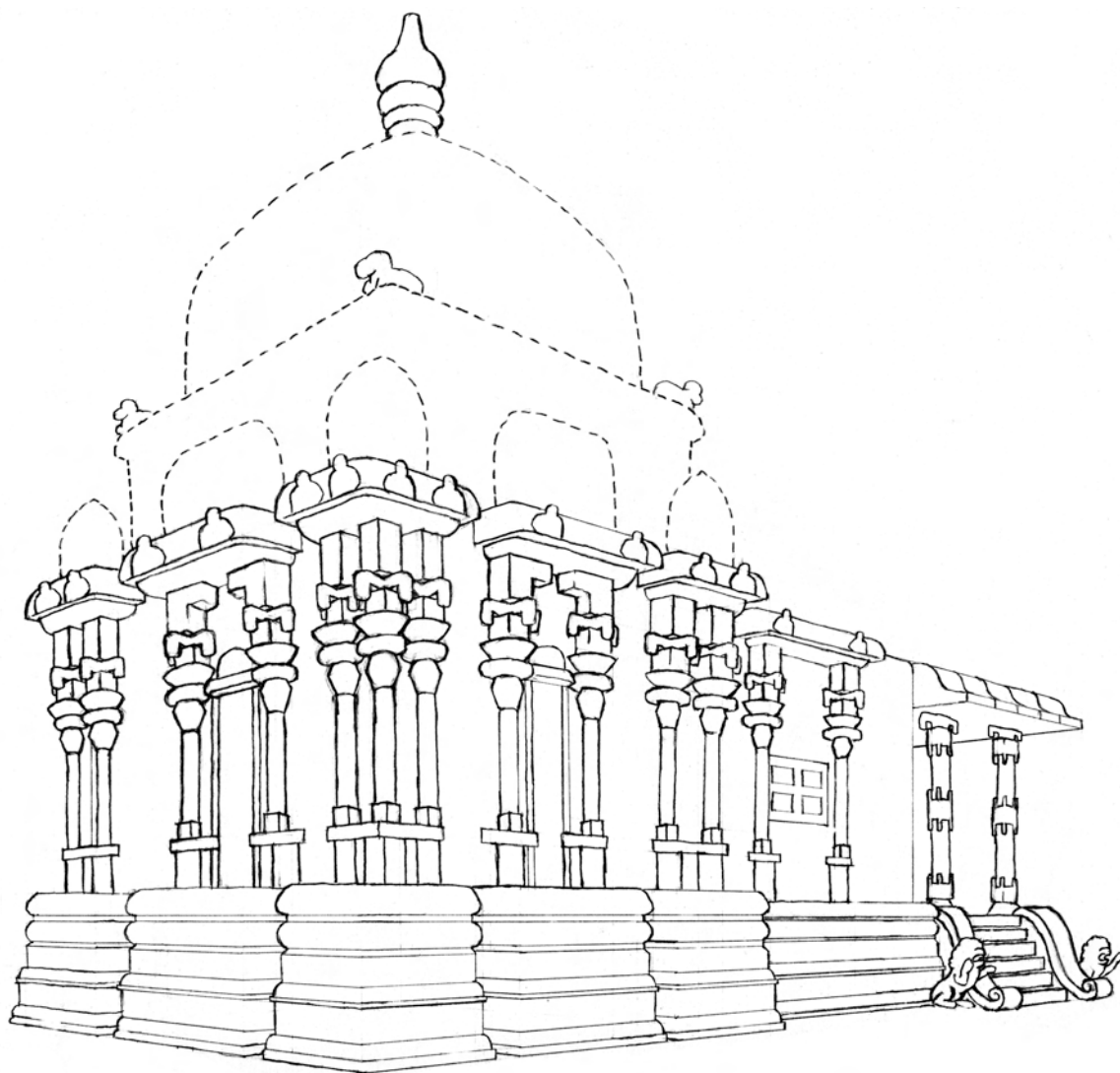


Fig. 4.83 View of Quanzhou Shiva temple from *garbagrha* looking to *mukhamandapa*. Not to scale. Artist: Mike Lee



Fig. 4.84 Detail of medallion containing wrestlers from QMM, Quanzhou
Note the inclusion of two scepters



Fig. 4.85 “Stone Bamboo Shoot,” Quanzhou

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APPENDIX 1: Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activity-Guild Inscriptions¹

[03]

Munisandai, Tirumayam Taluk, Pudukkottai District. On a stone on the bank of the local tank. Chola king Parakesari, ca. 927 CE.

Let it be auspicious! In the 20th year of the reign of kopparakecaripanmar, in kana nadu, the Disai Ayiranannurruvar of Muniyandai. . . the Valanjiyar Ainurruvar donated two kasus yielding annual interest for the big tank. . . Hail.

[04]

Kamudi, Ramanathapuram Dt. On the right face of an elephant shaped stone set up in front of the Valivittaiyanar temple. Ca. 10th century CE.

Let it be auspicious! The ones who possess the 500 documents, whose chests are adorned by Lakshmi, who descended from Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra, and were the children of the goddess Sri Paramesvari

Who were composed of those from the 18 pattinam, 32 velapuram (ports), and 64 markets, the chetti, the Chetti Puttira (Guta), the Kavarai (Valanjiyar), the land owners, the noble writers knowledgeable in Sanskrit, those of the bazaar streets, the warriors, and including (ullita) the hero, of Muda Nadu, Marvattu Malai Munivar Cingam (lion), Ranakitti of Puna Natu in Gangamandalam, Lancinkamum who was never afraid, the young lion Kavarai who carried the banner . . .

[08]

Samuttirapatti, Nattam Tk., Dindigal (Madurai) Dt. On a standing stone slab, now at TN Mahal Museum, Madurai. Chola-Pandya King Vikrama, 1050 CE.

Let it be auspicious! In the 26th year of King Vikrama Cola Pandya Tevar, we who protect the whole earth and possess the 500 charters, whose chest is adorned by Lakshmi and are the bravest on earth and descended from the deities Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra and were the children of the goddess Sri Durga of Aiyapolil (Ayyavole), who became friends of the “old goddess.”

¹ Y. Subbarayalu generously assisted me with these translations, though any inadequacies remain my own.

The translations refer to inscriptions transcribed by Y. Subbarayalu and P. Shanmugam in AMCA's "Appendix 2: Texts of Select inscriptions of the Trade Guilds," 227-283. Numbers prefacing translations here refer to Subbarayalu and Shanmugam's and are denoted by brackets e.g. [1], followed by place name (village, taluk, district), medium and format, king (if mentioned), and date. Elipses (. . .) mark unreadable portions of the inscription. All inscriptions are in Tamil script and language unless otherwise noted.

Happily transacting in the 18 pattinam, 32 velapuram, 64 covered markets, the chettis, the merchant chettis, the Valanjiyar (kavarai), Chamunda Svamigals, the group of 300 warriors of sorts carrying victorious parasols, the 700 swordbearers, warriors, the shop keepers on the big street, the merchants with *pasumpai*, and writers, all of whom made Kali grow emaciated and weak and eradicated all enemies on earth in every direction, for whom charity grows, whose fame is known everywhere, whose righteous scepter (symbol of kings) was present everywhere, and who happily carry on the *samaya dharma* (merchant code of conduct).

The Ainnuruvar of 1000 directions, the four corners of the earth, and of the 18 countries, the Ainnurruvar from Paniya nadu, and our sons, the merchant warriors, and our sons the servants of patinenbhumi, and [the warriors] met together in Paniyanadu, Rajendra Chola Valanadu, in Rajarajapandi Nadu . . . the big assembly named for the beautiful Pandya, under the Ainurruvan Tamarind tree. The Tisai Ayirattainurruvars' good deed is arranged as follows:

[Ed. Note: parts II, III, and IV remain untranslated. To summarize, part II states that the town assembly and the Ainnurruvar decided to turn the town into an *erivira-pattinam* (town honoring warriors serving the Ainnurruvar) in honor of Kalinayan alias Parakesari Muventavelan (warrior king name), who punished the enemies of the Valanjiyar, Nattuchettis, and other warriors. Parts III and IV contain a long list of signatories.]

[10]

Vembatti, Bhavani tk. Coimbatore Dt. (now at Kalaimagal School Museum, Erode), ca. 1074 CE

Let it be auspicious! 4 years have passed in the reign of Rajendra Cola Deva, the [Kulottunga I]. We, the Valanjiyar nagarattar, turned Vatkarai Vikram Palavapurattu (a commercial center) in Saiyamuri Natalvar Nattu into an *erivira-pattinam*.

Pirantaka Tevan alias the savior of Kongumandalam, who beheaded Natalvar of Madurai, Pilai Kandali, who beheaded Sundiracola Muttaraiyar in Musiri called Mumuticholapuram, the javelin thrower Vitanka Cetti who beheaded Aluravanai of Curallar [Surapetta in Andhra Pradesh in Tondainadu, the hero of matal who beheaded Kotai Colai alias Patainayakanai in Kakkai alias tula in Kallaka natu, Pandya Nadu.

The big assembly of merchants named Rajendra Cola Peruni(ravi) of Parutti Palli, comprising Viramanikkacetti, Centan Tirukkuraval (place name), Nandesu kavarai vitankan cattan Palaiya alias Tikaiyirattannurruva pillai Kantali, Araiya Mayilatti alias son of the hero, Singamuran alias The Ainnuruvar Velanum (velan root = velala, used as title of contemporary chola officials) [in?] Anjucukarai Nadu, Kavarai Vitankan, Kavaraikal Marvattumalai (soldier's title), The hero marvattumalai, Viraputtran (son of ?), The lion who opposed enemies, Valangai, the savior of Marvattumalai, the son of the beautiful ornamental bow, Soldier of the bazaar, the flower that doesn't fade, the decorative wheel (tentikkara cakkaramu), Vidanka Cetti who throws the sword.

We, the big assembly of warriors recognize the contributions of merchants to the deity of this town, and will protect their charities.

Anyone who obstructs this will incur all the sins committed by people living between the Ganges and [Kanya]kumari. Everyone in the big assembly will protect this. There is no other help than charity!

[12.1-2]

Vishakapattinam, Vishakapatanam tk., Vishakapatanam Dt. On a stone lying near Pravastu Rangacharya's house (now in local museum). Eastern Ganga King Anantavarman, 1090. 2 Identical inscriptions on single slab in Telegu and Tamil. Tamil version damaged, with full Telegu version.

Let it be auspicious! In the Saka year 1012, Purattati month, the 10th lunar day, Monday, Pushya star, the 12 members of the nagaram of Vishakapattinam alias Kulottunga Chola Pattanam, Malamdala Mata alias Asavana Padinenmidibhumi Nagarasenapati gave charters to the alias Nanaraja Vidyadhara Samamkattughamtti in Mattottam alias Ramakulvalli Pattanam (W Sri Lanka), an Anjuvannam merchant

In Vishakapattinam alias Kulottungacholapattinam the houses within the Anyutuva (i.e. Ainnurruvar) [perum]palli (i.e. mosque; borders described in N, S, E, W including property owned by possible muslim 'Umar omi' at N border) should be exempted from paying tax.

Anyone who gives trouble will incur the sin of killing 1000 cows and Brahmins on the banks of the Ganges (following in Sanskrit) and will suffer as a worm in dung for 60,000 years (sloka from Mahabharata, frequently used as imprecations in Sanskrit copper plates).

[12.3]

Vishakapattinam, Vishakapatanam tk., Vishakapatanam Dt. On a slab built into the entrance to the Jagga Rao observatory. Kulotunga Prithvisvara. Ca. 1090 CE.

Summary: More tax concessions given to area surrounding the Ainnurruvar mosque mentioned in 12.1-2. Gift sponsored by a member of the Anjuvannam merchant association of Pasai (which Y. Subbarayalu suggests might be Indonesia). Similar form to 12.1-2.

[14]

Kattur, Ponneri Tk. Chengalput Dt. Virriruntaperumal temple. Ca. 1100 CE

Let it be auspicious! We who protect the whole earth, famous for our heroism, and possess the 500 charters. . . full of virtues, truthful, of good conduct, intelligent, who are upholding the full code of the Valanjikas, havisuddha gandarvva (unclear-might be reference to Kannada), who are descended from Vasudeva, Kandali, and the sons of the goddess Paramesvari.

The Nangu Disai Ayiram, the 18 pattinam, 32 ports, the 64 Katikastavala Chettis, the Chetti Putran, the local betel nut traders, [following denote soldiers], the Kantali, the Bhatraka, Kamundasvami, Singam (lions), Cirupuli (tigers), the Valangai, and the writers assembled for the big, Nanadesi meeting (assembly) in Tirumayilarappil (probably Mylapore near Chennai), and made Ayyapulala alias Katturai into an *erivira-pattinam*. For this *erivira-pattinam*, we made the following arrangements:

City residents need not pay the customary taxes. If anyone collects that, they must pay back two times the amount as punishment. If any soldier enters to collect or demand a fee, take up sword to quarrel for it, enters houses, torments the citizens and attempts to take [money] by force they will not be admitted into the *erivira-pattinam*. If anyone breaks this arrangement, he will be excommunicated and become a destitute. Thus, we the Nanadesi Peruniravi big assembly of Tirumayilarppil agreed.

We the Samayam and the Vira Peruniravi (soldiers) agree to these tax exemptions. As other towns do, so should we. Should anyone break this arrangement, they will incur all the sins of the people living between the Ganges and Kumari (Rivers). We hereby take the feet of our protectors on our heads.

[15]

Singalantapuram, Musiri Tk. Trichirappalli Dt. On a planted stone slab called santikkal in the village, ca. 1100

Let it be auspicious! We who protect the whole earth and possess the 500 charters, whose chest is adorned by Lakshmi and are the bravest on earth and descended from the deities Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra and were the children of the goddess Sri Durga of Aiyapolil (Ayyavole), who became friends to Sri Vashtalaki (Bhattanki)

[under whom] charity prospers and ill fortune vanishes, the ones whose enormous fame is heard in every direction, who have the scepter as a god, and maintain the assembly's code of conduct.

The Valangai Uyyakkondarkal of Singalantapuram, an *erivira-pattinam*, have done nice things to the Patinenbhumi Virakodiyar (warrior groups), as follows:

When once the local chief Irankolar's mercenaries surrounded Vaikuntanadalvan the Uyyakkondargal went to his rescue and two of their warriors, Maravangal Kalan and Sattuyakondan, got killed to protect him.

Then when a mercenary of Magatainadarvar attacked Desi Aparanapillai, Chetantidaigal (an Uyyakondan soldier), killed that Nadalvan.

When Etiran Singam was going on a road, forest dwellers obstructed him and took one Viragal Matalai [as a hostage]. Immediately the Uyyakondadargal followed in pursuit and rescued him.

In recognition of all of these, the Patinenbhumī Virakodiyar of 3 mandalams, the heroic “Ilaviranai”, Desi Etirayan Singam, Ganapati Vira Vaikanju Puliya, Desi Abaranapillai, Desikonnnarai Kolungidasanaṁ Nattuchetti who were reborn, Aumunaikanda Nadu Chettiyar, Yatavarama Nadu Chettiyar, Tiruvanukkapillai Nadu Chettiyar, Desi Adaikal Nadu Chettiyar, and all

The Patinenbumi Virakodiyar (soldiers) “who got rebirth” arranged for the Uyyakkondarkal of this Vinkaltalam (*erivīra-pattinam*) certain fees from this town. . .

[26]

Tirukkannapuram, Nannilam Tk, Thanjavur Dt., Saurirajaperumal temple, Kulottunga Chola III, 1189 CE

Let it be auspicious! In the 10th year of the Tribhuvanam Chakravartigal who took Madurai and Sri Lanka, Sri Kulottunga Chola [III].

Their had been a custom of feeding the Srivaishnava devotees in ‘Sucakar Karunakara Vira,’ on the NE corner of the north street, which surrounds the Holy Visnu temple Tirukkannapuram, on every festival day, besides arrangement to repair and rebuild the roof, and ensure the livelihood of the matha’s leader. An inscription records that our ancestors did this previously, but this has since stopped.

In all villages and cities, including Tirunirru Cholapuram, [all members of the] Sucakar Karunagara Vira shall pay 2 kasu [for the actions described above]. We, the Karunakara Vira alias Tennilankai Valanjiyar (merchant group of Sri Lanka mentioned in 9th -10th c. inscriptions), engraved this on stone so long as the sun and moon shall shine.

[28]

Vahalkada, Anuradhapura Dt., Sri Lanka, ca. 1200 CE

Part I:

We who protect the whole earth and possess the 500 charters, whose chest is adorned by Lakshmi and are the bravest on earth and descended from the deities Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra and were the children of the goddess Sri Durga of Aiyapolil (Ayyavole)

The Vira Valanjiyar (heroic valanjiyar) of the glittering spear, whose mansions have flags so high as to touch the moon, the 18 ports, 32 velapuram, 64 covered markets, under whom dharma grows, the chetti, the chettiputtiran, kavara, betel leaf merchants (katrivar), Chamunda Svami, Ankakarar (soldiers), avanakkaranum (shopkeepers on big street), Manjiyar, . . . the 300 (usually 700) warriors with swords, the 300 of the victorious parasol, . . . under whom charity prospered and evil weakened, the ones with the righteous scepter, “Patinenbhumi Desi Tisaiyayirattannurruvar assembled in Kattinattu Aliaskattiruttana Nadu, Olaipuram (town).”

Individual names of warriors: Vetti Valirakkina Patinenbhumi Nattuchetti, “Desi Head” (Mantai) (earliest Chinese pottery found in Mantai in 9th c.) Alakiya Manavalanar alias Munru Taramalaikkalankata Kanta Nattucettiyar alias Desikku Onnatarai Vettun Chettiyar; Perran Vitivitanka Nanadesi Ataikkala Nattuchchetti; Velan Ampalakkuttan alias Virakal Janavarapillai Nattuchettiyar; Devantaiyanar alias Virakal Senattu Chettiyar; Chetti Devan alias Munrutaram Tin Kalankata Kanta Annuruvantan alias Virakal; Corutai Appan; Arinji Kulainjcan alias Mantai Tolakkatan Kannatar Pattavartana; Kantan Apaiyam alias Nurayirat Tacamati Virakal Ilaviyanai; Talaitalakalan Desi Pattavartana; Kantan Jayakondan alias Matikaiyantan; Sendan Etiralan Mallan alias Desi Matavarana; Sattan Sattan alias Valanjiyar Senapati Valanjeyantar; Konana Matavar alias Valangaiandar; Akkacalai Vikkiramadittar alias Mantai Ilanjinam; Kanavati Colan alias [Avittu] Muriyan.

We will make Kattaneri alias Nanadesi into a Virapattanam. . . (from the rest we can infer that the local chief was extorting locals, someone died, and that the Patinenbhumi Nattuchetti and Virakotiyar swore to protect the town—made an oath with a sword to protect)

Part II:

. . . We, the Patinenbhumi Virakotiyar made and planted this stone. Don’t forget charity!

[29]

Nattam (Koyilpatti), Nattam Tk., Madurai (Dindigal) Dt., ca. 1200 CE

First side:

Let it be auspicious! In the 26th year of King Vikrama Cola Pandya Tevar, we who protect the whole earth and possess the 500 charters, whose chest is adorned by Lakshmi and are the bravest on earth and descended from the deities Sri Vasudeva, Kandali, Mulabhadra and were the children of the goddess Sri Durga of Aiyapolil (Ayyavole), who became friends of Sri Devi. For whom charity prospered and bad things disappeared in all directions, who hold the righteous scepter, and who are happily transacting with Dharma in all countries.

Met in Eripadai-nallur, Tuvarapati Nadu, in the righteous Nanadesi Ainurruvan open ground (assembly place). [This included] The Nankutisai Pattinenbhumi Desi Tisai Vilan Kutisaiyayirattannurruvar, the Nattuchetti from various countries (Palamandalankalil), the Dharma chettis,

The patinenbhumi warriors: Sembiyan Senapati Yana, Vaikunta Natalvan alias Valangai pillai, Radjahiraja Valangai Napporpati. . . (list of names continues onto second side but is damaged)

Second side:

“Alakiya Pandya (other fragmented names)

Having made our decision by raising hands, we the Nattuchetis from every Mandalam gave this stone, we the Patinenbhumi Virakoti, Niravitai Velaikkaran Nanadesi Tanai Chetti wrote this.

[30]

Valikandapuram, Perambalur Tk., Tiruchirappalli Dt., Kulottunga Chola III, 1207 CE

Let it be auspicious! In the 29th year of the Tribhuvanam Chakkravartigal who took the head of the Pandiyan, Sri Kulottunga Chola [III].

To the Padinenbhumi of Valikandapuramudaiyar Tiruvalisuramudaiyar nayanar temple, we the Vaniya [oil merchant] nagaram of Viracola Nallur, the Padinenbhumi Vaniyanagaram and the Vaniya nagaram of Atikiltalam Arakallur subdivision, gave evening lamps to the Nayanar within the outlines of the following agreement.

This koyil is our hereditary possession. The padinenbhumi vaniya nagarattar met (fully, without deficiency) in the Tanmatavalan (tavalan=another name for merchants) Tirukkkavan, (open hall/verandah) of the Sri Kailasamudaiyar Nayanar koyil.

In the king's 28th year, we decided to give the product of one oil press to the Tiruvalisvaramudaiyar Nayanar Koyil for Santi Vilakku. For one chekku (press) we shall get 100 nalis of sesame oil—for this, we will get two times the sum in ghee, totalling 200 nalis. For each nali there will be one lamp, and [daily] 27 lamps will be burned. For the annual festival, 175 will be burned for as long as the sun and moon shine.

Additionally, instead of requiring the oil guild's laborers to perform compulsory labor, we the merchants will ourselves pay [the equivalent cash?] to the tax collectors.

Moreover, soldiers should not enter the city and ask fees from this Curatalam/Virapattinam. The labor that the vanigar give to the local chief and that is collected from this curatalam, will be used to renovate and repair the temple's processional cart, which we shall oversee.

Thus agreed, one times, two times, and then three times, we engraved [this charter] on the holy stone wall of the temple. If anyone destroys/thinks badly of this decision, he will be excommunicated and branded as one among swine and dogs. We thus agreed and wrote and gifted this inscription. Patinenbhumi of the Nagaram, The Vaniya [oil merchant] nagaram of Viracola Nallur, The Vaniya nagaram of Atikiltalam Arakallur. This is under the protection of all devotees, who protect and take holy feet on their heads.

[31]

Anbil, Lalgudi Tk., Tiruchirappalli Dt., 1235 CE

(Joint inscription of merchants and Cittiramel Periyanaadu. Content shows that inscription was originally from another temple, but reinstalled in Anbil temple.)

Let it be auspicious! We the Cittiramel Periyanaadu, who are entirely well versed in the famous, righteous, and just books containing 3 Tamil works, and we the Tisai Ayirattainnuruvar who shines in all 4 directions, 18 continents and directions.

All of the mandalams including the nattucetti, the local chetti, warriors, our sons, the 64 groups of soldiers, the famous ones, famous servant groups (soldiers and artisans), fully assembled within the beautiful dense garden, filled with trees, in the Rajaraja Big assembly.

In the 19th year of the Tribhuvana Chakravartigal Sri Rajaraja Devar, in the waxing moon, on the 5th day, Thursday, Revati star, we unanimously agreed and resolved as follows:

We restored the previous [status] of tax free . . . worship and renovation . . . to the Amutamoli Perumpalli (probably a Jain temple) in Tiruvitaikkuti, Poykainadu, Rajaraja Valanadu.

[32]

Tittandatanapuram, Ramanathapuram, Shiva temple, Pandya Vira Pandya, 1269 CE

[The donor] Sarvatanda Mutaiyar Tirumalai Ceyvitta Tirumalai Matakkaal (Matakhalana=female deity used as suffix by merchants) Aracurutaiyar alias Villiyalvar alias Tiruvampalamudaiyar made a *mandpam* in his name to the temple deity.

[to?] the temple manager, Iraniyamuttu Nattu Ciruturutaiyan Perumal Iraratevan alias Tennavataiyan. In this city, the Aanjuvannam and the Manigramam were part of the big Patinenvishaiyar assembly.

[The patron] Tirumalai Matakkaal alias Aracutaiyar alias Tirumpalamutaiyar, the Manigramam and the Aanjuvannam, the transacting outsiders [unclear], [unclear group], the residents of the big bazaar, [unclear group], the undyed cloth salesmen (chetti), the

Tennilangai Valanjiyars (sri lanka connection), the weavers, cloth merchants, oil merchants, and sea traders

We all assembled in front of the goddess (used by merchants as suffix) temple and voluntarily poured water [gifted] the cess received on all merchandise around the temple: spreading [cloth] (*viripanna*), folding [cloth] (*matipanna*), vegetables, For every coin—including all inside and outside commissions—we decided to give 4 nali for paddy and 1 uri for each nail of husked rice. One kasu per article of merchandise can be collected as long as the moon shines, from 11th year. . .

[33]

Avur, Tiruvannamalai Tk., North Arcot Dt., Ruined Shiva temple, Kopperunjingadeva, 1272 CE

Let it be auspicious! In the 30th year of Cakalapuvana Chakravartigal Sri Kopperunsingadevar, on Sundara Nayanar alias Ceyacevakan Cettiyar day,

The followers of the holy Mahbodi (Buddha), the good vasiyas and virtuous market dwellers, friends to all, removers of poverty, filled with virtue, the brave carriers of the banner of Garuda, the descendents of Kubera (caste name) who flourish in good places and make evil disintegrate (*kalimeliya*) and for whom fame grows and enmity vanishes.

Those who are known in every direction, with the righteous scepter as their guide and *pasumpai/Sri Agni* (unclear), happily transacting, we the Patinenbhumi Tisai Vilangu Tiralayirattutikal Vanigar met on the North bank of the Pennai river in Avur Utaiyar in Chetti Mandalam at the Tiruvakattisvaram Udaiyar Nayanar temple in Tula month, 4th moon day, 5th day (?), Thursday, Mula star, and gave the Nayanar . . . (insignia?-astradevarai). . .on that day.

[34]

Krishnapatnam, Budur Tk., Nellore Dt., Siddhesvarasvami temple, 1279 CE

Let it be auspicious! In the Saka year 1201 (1279 CE) of the current year, in the second year of the Tribhuvana Chakravartigal Sri Irumati Tirukkalattitevar (small chief of area)

In Kollitturaiyan alias Gantagopala Pattinattu Natu Nagara, the Anjuvannam Vanigars of Malaimandalam, all of the merchants from outside in the 18 countries, we the Ainnurruvan met in the open hall/courtyard and resolved

In Mina month, 10th day of fortnight (manumasiddhisvaram), for the holy food offering and temple renovation to the god Ullittanavaiyirru, we arranged to give as capital

¼ percent of all commodities imported and exported out of this town's harbor. We arranged this ¼ percent to the god (Innayanarkku) for as long as the sun and moon shall last.

We, the Nadu Nagaram, the Anjuvannam Vanigars of Malaimandalam, and the Nandesī Patinenbhumis Samasta Paradesika, the devotees of Shiva, will protect this.

[35]

Sarkar Periyapalayam, Perundurai Tk., Erode Dt., Shiva temple, 1289 CE

Let it be auspicious! In the 4th year of Sri Sundara Pandya. Let it be auspicious! The ones holding the 500 noble charters, whose chests Lakshmi adorns, who are helped by Sri Vasudeva, and are sons of Kandali, Sri Ayyapolil, Paramesvari, Pattaraki, Sri Bhagavati, and Bhumidevi. Who have mastered Southern Tamil (Madurai Tamil) and northern language (Sanskrit), and are well versed in the *niti sastras*, who speak sweet words, but whose language removes evil, and who being intelligent, have flourished in every mandalam for a long time. Who are treated as gods-- praised by Indra, fanned by the wind god, and been lustrated by the rain god. They are seated with Lakshmi, filled with goodness, just and virtuous. From the area bounded by the rising Himalayas and the 7 seas, they fan out in all 8 directions to all countries.

These residents of the Jambu island (India): [from] Pumpuhar, Tiruvarur, Cranganore, [unclear], Paccil (Indonesia?), and all other important towns, these merchants made these towns flourish. You cannot find any flaw within these 12 towns, but they have become old, [and so] the merchants (chettis) migrated to Kongu, settled in 9 big towns, and lived there happily

On big streets in tall buildings, in 18 pattinam, 32 ports, 64 covered markets, and conducted righteous transactions. The Cetti Viraputtirarkal (assoc with soldiers), many nagaram in Malaimandalam (Kerala), we of 18 continents in the 4 directions, we the Ainnurruvan big assembly, Nattuchetti, local chetti, 64 soldiers, Munai Virakkotiyar, with the righteous scepter as a guide, with the sack as god, with the cittirameliyetunaiyaka (plough is their friend) assembled together in the Ainnurruvan park, and unanimously decided to the following:

On international and domestic exported and imported goods:
2 panam for each bundle of cloth; 1/20 panam for each spool of thread/yarn; ½ panam for each areca nut; for each bag 1/20 panam; donkey bundles . . . ; ½ panam for black commodities (iron?); 1/16 panam for grains; 1 panam for elephant; ½ panam for horse; sandalwood bundle ¼ panam, coarse cloth (?) ¼ panam, young cattle 1/10 panam, other commodities proportionately

These contributions will be collected everywhere by mendicant accountants

In this way, we proposed and gave these documents in order to supply the holy Alutaiya Nayanar temple storehouse with things needed for the holy festivals. This [decision] will be protected.

In this way, the great Patinenvishaya assembly members signed:

[complete signature = Thus, I [insert name] signed in this way]

Sundara Perumal; Atkonda Nayakar; Pillai Nattuccetti; Eralapurattu (Kerala) Viyapari Kuttankanna; Periyadevan of Uraiyur; Kayilayan alias Vanikaimata of Eralapurattu (kerala); Tiruviraticuramudaiyan alias Kalai Perumal of Aruviyurana (Ramnad) alias Kalacaippati; Tirunilai Alakiya alias Atiraivicatuvan of Nalavur (Tanjavur or S. Arcot area?); Ulakan Uyyavantana alias Ceraman Tolan of Tirumalainadu (Ramnad) Varanavaci Big Street Conapayanapurattu Perumankala; Tontakanaya alias Periyyanayan of Tiruvarur; Vanigairatitan; The Tiruvarur viyapari, Katuvankutaiyan alias Tiruannamalai Peruman; Ciriyaipillai of Pandimandalam in Sundarapantiyapuram; Sokkanar in Vellore Kotandaramapuram Palvay... .

[Ed. note: not all signatories translated]

[36]

Tiruppangili, Lalgudi Tk., Tiruchirappalli Dt., 1295 CE

[Ed. note: combined *praśasti* of the *Citramēḷi-Periyanāḍu* and Ainnurruvar]

Let it be auspicious! In the 27th year of Komarapanmar alias Tribhuvana Chakkravartigal, Sri Kulasekaradevar, who conquered all mandalams in the 27th Kumba month, black fortnight, 11th lunation, on Friday, with the star Uttiram,

The sons of Sri Bhumi Devi, the sons of Ayyapolil, Paramesvari and who are knowledgeable in the northern and southern love, who observe *niti* (*dharma śāstra*), from whose chest Lakshmi (*tirumakal piriya*) never separates, who shine in every direction, who speak sweet words, but whose harsh words remove evil, who have flourished in every mandalam across the 4 oceans forever (as long as the moon), who are fanned by the wind god and lustrated by the rain god, whose people are happy everywhere, whose gardens have coconut, jack fruit, mango, plantain, areca nut, jasmine, parrots, beautifully existing together, who make charity prosper and evil disappear, whose fame grows as their enemies are vanquished, who carry the righteous scepter, beautiful plough, their godlike *pasumpai* that gives bright light, who are happily transacting with kindness and compassion.

Who are well versed in the three Tamil works noted for good ethical and famous knowledge (*mummati molintu*), Citrameliperiyanadu Nadu, our 64 sons, Munai, Munavirakotiyar, the well-known nadu and nagarams and agarabrahmadevam—all having met, after vanquishing enemies, made the following resolution:

In the Tiruppanjili Nayanar koyil, the construction on the large compound wall has remained unfinished until this day. . . and as the religious man, Tava perumal mutaliyar has taken responsibility for the [construction work] on the compound wall. . . for every veli of paddy, ½ grain from the two crops (1st crop and 2nd crop corresponding to 2 harvest seasons) will be given each year. We give at the rate of: for every veli we will give one pannam. In this way we shall conduct this so long as the moon shines.

If anyone should refuse to pay this money, we will take his bronze utensils and break them with force. This we inscribed on stone and copper plate. In this way we agreed and consented—the nagaram dwellers and the Akara Brahmadesankal.

[38]

Kovilpatti, Kulittalai Tk., Tiruchirappalli Dt., 1305 CE

We are the Ainnurruvar, who are happily transacting with love and kindness, who uphold the dharma of the trade guild in every country across all oceans, and the *nankutica patinen*. . . *desi*, whose light shines in every direction.

We, who were importing and exporting in all four directions, 18 ports, we the shining Tisai Ayirattainnurruvar [who were on] every street and in every direction

We, the, Nattuchettis, Talachettis, our sons the Munaiyil Munaivirakkottiyar, we the (Uttamanitiyuyar Perunkarunai) Cittiramelai Periyannadu, all assembled in the Accakanta garden and unanimously, while upholding the trade guild dharma, made this decision. [Date and king named]

To the Rairaracuramudaiyar Nayanar of Vatataliyur (old name for Koyilpatti) temple in Konad alias Katalataiyatilankaikonda Cola Valanadu Urattur Kurram Mutucorkuti Nadu, we the nagaram dwellers of Ollaiyur Kurrattu Sundarachola Puram alias Desiyukanta Pattinam, We the nagaram of the Kodumbalur Manigramam, the nagaram of Telingakulakala (enemy to the Telingas/ Chalukyas)puram alias Kulottungachola Pattinam, the nagaram of Konraiyyur alias Uttamachola Puram

In this way we decided for the welfare and dharma of the Rajaratisvaramudaiyar Nayanar, to contribute the following portion of our profits on merchandise: 1 panam and 3 ma for each poti of black pepper; for each pakku 1 panam and 2 ma, for each sari 1 panam and 6 ma; for each horse 1 panam, for each camel ½ panam, for each avilak kattu 1 panam, for each bundle of yak hair (agil), sandalwood, camphor, including commodities from many mandalams 1 panam. . . for every cow including ox, and cattle 1 panam and ½ ma; woolen cloth, verkombu (?), peruku (?), musk, rod, etc. 1 panam and ½ ma per bundle (poti); paddy bundle 1 panam ½ ma; coarse grains and pulses 1 panam per bundle, tamarind 1 panam per bundle, kanamalada (?), conch, ivory 1 panam 1 ½ ma per load, rice 1 panam per bundle, salt cart, tamarind cart, paddy cart, etc. 1/8 panam. Thus all other commodities may be judged and fees fixed.

This pattanapaguti thus accrued shall be given to the deity without pilferage. Let this be inscribed on stone and copper. Thus as orders of the samayam the samayam accountant, the accountant of Kodumbalur Manigramam, Tevan Tikumeni Alagiyan wrote this.

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF ARCHITECTURAL TERMINOLOGY

<i>Adhiṣṭhāna</i>	moulded base
<i>Ardhamañḍapa</i>	half-hall articulated with the vimāna
<i>Bhadra</i>	central offset (wall division)
<i>Bhadrakōṣṭha</i>	bhadra-niche
<i>Bhūtamālā</i>	band of goblins (on projecting rafter-ends beneath the cornice of the architrave)
<i>Brahmakānta</i>	tetragonal column-type
<i>Citrakhaṇḍa</i>	column-type with three cubes connected by octagonal shaft
<i>Dēvakōṣṭha</i>	niche for a divinity
<i>Dvārapāla</i>	door-guardian
<i>Gala</i>	kantha; recessed moulding
<i>Galapāda</i>	vertical block at intervals inside the gala
<i>Garbhagrha</i>	womb-house; sanctum
<i>Ghaṭa</i>	vase, pot; cushion-shaped pillar-part (above laśuna)
<i>Gōpura</i>	gate-house
<i>Grīvā</i>	neck; recess between the cupola and the entablature
<i>Hāra</i>	balustrade or cloistered parapet in the superstructure, most often including kūṭa and śālā aedicule; connecting wall segment
<i>Hastihasta</i>	stairway banister
<i>Jagatī</i>	basal moulding of adhiṣṭhāna; plinth
<i>Jāla</i>	grille; grille-pattern
<i>Kāl</i>	pillar shaft

<i>Kaṇṭha</i>	recess between mouldings
<i>Kapōta</i>	roll-cornice; also overhanging cornice
<i>Kīrtimukha</i>	“face of glory” (decorative motif)
<i>Kōyil</i>	temple
<i>Kuḍu</i>	gable-end of a wagon vault; or “horseshoe” motif
<i>Kumuda</i>	torus moulding: tripaṭṭa, vṛtta
<i>Kūṭa</i>	square aedicule
<i>Laśuna</i>	ridged, vase-shaped, pillar-part
<i>Mahāmaṇḍapa</i>	large hall attached to ardhamāṇḍapa
<i>Mālāsthāna</i>	decorated pillar part below ghaṭa
<i>Maṇḍapa</i>	hall, generally with columns
<i>mukhamaṇḍapa</i>	front hall; entry hall
<i>Nāsikā</i>	diminutive of gable-end of a wagon vault
<i>Ōma</i>	basal-block of pillar or pilaster
<i>Padma</i>	inverted cyma-recta moulding with lotus petal pattern
<i>Pañjara</i>	fronton of vaulted apsidal shrine
<i>Paṭṭika</i>	rectangular fillet; often top slab of adīṣṭhana
<i>Pōtigai</i>	bracket-capital
<i>Puṣpapōtigai</i>	flower blossom (or bud) extension of pōdigai
<i>Śālā</i>	rectangular wagon-vault aedicule
<i>Stūpikā</i>	jar-finial
<i>Tōraṇa</i>	gateway pattern
<i>Tripaṭṭa</i>	tri-faceted (kumuda type)

<i>Upapīṭham</i>	platform or socle beneath the adhiṣṭhana
<i>Vimāna</i>	shrine, temple
<i>Vṛtta</i>	circular (kumuda type)
<i>Vyāla</i>	composite fantastic animal
<i>Vyālamālā</i>	band of vyāla figures